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THE NAMELESS CITY

A Novel

BY

STEPHEN GRAIL

NEW YORK
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August, 1893

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THE NAMELESS CITY

A Rommany Romance

BY

STEPHEN GRAIL

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THE NAMELESS CITY

PROLOGUE

It was during Church Parade on a hot June Sunday that Lancelot Challice saw her again. Pleasant but unexpected sight. After parting with a woman at Damascus one does not anticipate finding her calmly surveying fashionable London from a Hyde Park chair. At first he could scarcely believe his eyes, but was ultimately forced to do so, as on a closer inspection it proved to be none other than Mrs. Ingraham. She looked bored, he thought, and gazed with an absent air at the highly civilized throng passing before her. Also, she drew figures in the dust at intervals with the tip of her sunshade. Abstraction and figure-drawing denoted plainly that her thoughts were far away.

"In Damascus, perhaps," muttered Challice, thinking of what took place at their last meeting. "Hm! possibly I have the privilege of taking up her attention. It may be that she is regretting the cruelty of her dismissal."

He hoped that this might be so, but could not be certain. So far as facial expression was concerned she might have been the Sphinx, so inscrutable was her countenance. Not an inept comparison by any means, for Sphinx she was to him, propounding by her every action the unguessable riddle of femininity. From Adam downward no man has solved that riddle, and why should Challice hope to be the new Œdipus?

They were islanded, as it were, by the surrounding ocean of fashionable life—he this, she that side of the walk, and between, the river of humanity. Not thus had been their last meeting. By closing his eyes Challice could recall, even to the smallest detail, the scene of six months ago. A house-top in old Damascus, at the sunset hour. Mrs. Ingraham swathed in Eastern silks, a modern Cleopatra in appearance, leaning against the low parapet, he kneeling at her feet pleading for love. Then the sun sank down behind the hills, and the stars came out to find but one figure remaining on the house-top, the other, rejected and scorned, flying from the city. In an infinitesimal moment of time the whole picture flashed before his mind's eye with photographic distinctness.

Challice had a good memory, a vivid imagination, and these reproduced the scene so strongly that for the moment he felt again in all their intensity the

pangs he had then undergone. A second afterwards he opened his eyes, and lo! Damascus was not. He found himself in London, in Hyde Park, on Sunday, and Mrs. Ingraham, with nothing Eastern about her, save her oval face and olive skin, was staring at him across the tide of humanity flowing between their chairs.

Perhaps it was a case of telepathy, and by thus calling up the past in his own mind he had informed her of the fact that he was present. He doubted that this could be so. Telepathy demands a certain amount of existent sympathy between the subjects, more especially when, as in this instance, it is practised unconsciously. On his part Challice felt that he had fulfilled this necessary condition; but the fact that she, who was of no one mind with him, should respond immediately to such soul-talk, puzzled him not a little. To analyze this psychology he had no time, as having recognized his face she invited him to her side with that enigmatic smile the deception of which he knew so well. Instinctively afraid, he hesitated about taking advantage of the concession, and so hesitating, was lost.

"It is hardly wise to go," murmured Challice, as he went; "still, I am now on my guard; that is a great gain. She shall not have the chance of torturing me again. If I am as cold and self-controlled as she the duel will be fairer."

A foolish remark. No duel can be fair when the adversaries are man and woman. The odds are too much in favor of the latter. Challice, already unconsciously weakened by the sight of her face, forgot that inevitable inequality, and buckling on the armor of a careless demeanor, went forth to meet the fair Amazon. She had conquered him before, and in this case, as might have been expected, history repeated itself.

"Pekin, Tokio, 'Frisco, New York, Paris, Rome, and now London. The seventh time of meeting. Who dare deny that there is luck in odd numbers. How do you do, Mrs. Ingraham?"

He greeted her in this geographical fashion, with the object of showing by the steadiness of his voice, how little her presence moved him. She, too much a woman to be deceived by so shallow an artifice, stretched out her hand with a fleeting smile of scorn.

"I am glad to see you again, Mr. Challice. Your salutation has at least the merit of originality."

"Do you not think it a suitable mode of greeting for such hardened travellers as we?" Then, without waiting for a reply, "May I sit down?—thank you! And what do you think of Church Parade during The Season?"

Mrs. Ingraham emphasized her reply with a slight shrug. "I find it very dull."

"That is scarcely to be wondered at after your late experience. It lacks the romance of the East."

"The romance of Damascus."

The thrust went home, and Challice winced. She saw this and smiled. It was meet punishment for his pretended indifference.

"Yes!" he answered, bravely, mending his speech; "it lacks the romance of Damascus. By-the-way, did you stay there long?"

"Not more than a week after your departure. It was tiresome without you."

"Had I then the felicity of rendering it bearable to Mrs. Ingraham?" This time the button was off his foil, and it was her turn to wince. She, angry at his using her own weapons, did not parry the thrust with her accustomed skill.

"I never pay compliments, Mr. Challice. That is a man's privilege."

"And one of which they take the fullest advantage. Shall I—"

"By no means," interrupted Mrs. Ingraham, pleasantly; "I think we know one another well enough to dispense with compliments."

"Certainly we did not make use of them at Damascus," he said, bitterly; "it was all plain speaking there."

Mrs. Ingraham gave no sign of having heard this last remark, but arose from her chair with a conven-

tional smile on her lips—a smile which meant nothing and enraged him greatly. He felt that she was playing with him.

"I am rather tired of the Park, Mr. Challice. May I ask you to escort me to Curzon Street?"

He, inwardly fuming at her caprice, assented with a bow, and together they moved towards the Achilles Statue. Several people looked approvingly after the handsome couple as they departed. Recognition inspired thoughts which begot speech, and they were discussed before they were well out of hearing.

"It is a case there, I fancy," said one man to another.

"How do you know that?" questioned his companion. "You have never seen Challice dancing attendance on Mrs. Ingraham before."

"No! But I can tell their feelings by the expression of their faces. He loves her, but—"

"She does not love him. This is to be expected with such an icicle as Mrs. Ingraham. I never knew her to love any one, not even that old husband of hers, who was polite enough to die in the first year of the marriage and leave her all the money."

"Hm! May never does appreciate December. But in this case the disqualification of age is removed. Challice is handsome—so is she. He has money, she has more. They both love travelling, and neither of them is encumbered with relations.

I think myself it would be an ideal marriage—quite one of those superfine matches said to be made in heaven."

"It won't be made anywhere," retorted his friend, decisively. "Mrs. Ingraham will marry no one save the Wandering Jew. She is too fond of travelling to tie herself down to a husband and a tea-urn."

By this time the two people whose characters were being so freely discussed had left the gay crowd far behind, and were strolling leisurely towards Curzon Street. Mrs. Ingraham had put up her sunshade, and the light striking through the red silk flung a rose tint on her face. Thus etheralized she looked more beautiful than ever, and perhaps guessed as much, for she secretly resented the persistency with which her companion kept his eyes away from so dangerous a neighborhood. In sulky silence he marched on, evidently determined to make her speak first. She did, and her remark was by no means amiable.

"You were certainly more agreeable at Damascus, Mr. Challice."

"I had more reason to be so. Life in a fool's paradise is not without certain advantages."

"Still thinking of that old folly?"

"Can you wonder at it?" said Challice, casting an angry look at her indifferent expression; "my broken heart—"

Mrs. Ingraham interrupted this sentimental speech with a scornful little laugh.

"Oh, dear me! Your broken heart! As if any man ever broke his heart over a passing fancy."

"It was—it is, more than a passing fancy. Who knows that better than you do? Have I not followed you like a dog all over the world? Pekin, Tokio—"

"I think you mentioned those places before," she said, provokingly; "let us admit that you did follow me all over the world. What then?"

"I want you to be my wife."

"You asked me that some time ago. At Damascus, wasn't it?"

"You know well enough. It was there you refused to marry me."

"Is that a crime?"

"I don't know," he answered, petulantly, exasperated by her fencing; "I don't care."

"Don't you? Then why did you speak to me to-day?"

"I know of no reason unless the sufficiently good one that I am a fool."

"No, my friend," said Mrs. Ingraham, touching his arm lightly, "you are no fool. You only call yourself such an ugly name out of pique. You are wiser than you think in speaking to me to-day."

Challice stared at her in mute amazement, whereat she laughed at the perplexity of his expression.

"Don't you believe me, Mr. Challice?"

"I don't know!" he murmured, distrustfully. "After what you said at Damascus—"

"No matter what I said at Damascus—the question is what I say in London."

"That you love me and will be my wife?"

"I don't say that—yet."

"Then you—"

"A penny, my beautiful angel, for a cup of coffee."

The interruption came from a sturdy beggar, who thrust a brown hand in front of Mrs. Ingraham. Glad to have some one on whom to vent his temper, Challice turned angrily on the man. A gigantic mendicant he was, with wicked black eyes set in a brown face. His whole appearance was un-English and curious.

"Don't trouble the lady, or—"

"Wait a moment, Mr. Challice," said Mrs. Ingraham, taking a shilling from her purse, "I want to give him this."

Looking steadily at the beggar she handed him the money.

"Ja pukenus drován," she said, in a low voice, glancing at Challice to mark the effect of her speech.

The man gave a start, his eyes glittered, and took off his hat as he made reply:

"Kushto bak miri pen."

"What language is that?" asked Challice, when the man, still astonished, had taken his departure.

"You don't know?" she queried, in a disappointed tone.

"I? No! I never heard it before."

"Strange! strange!" she muttered, walking on quickly; "yet I fancied it might be so."

"What might be so, Mrs. Ingraham?"

"Never mind," she replied, recovering her composure. "What were you saying before we were interrupted?"

"I was repeating the old story of Damascus."

"So you were. Well, here we are at Curzon Street. I am sorry I cannot ask you to luncheon, but I am staying with some friends, and therefore cannot do so."

"But surely you are not going to leave me like this! When am I to see you again?"

"Let me see," she said, reflectively; "this is the second Sunday in June, is it not?"

"I believe so, but I really do not—"

"Then let us say this day next year at the Achilles Statue."

"You are jesting," he said, coldly.

"I was never more serious in my life. Foolish fellow," she added, in a caressing tone; "do you think

I would have teased you so much had I not intended to reward you later on?"

"But next year!" he remonstrated, dolefully.

"Yes! Next year," repeated Mrs. Ingraham, decisively. "I will give you an answer then—probably the answer will be different to that of Damascus. Of this, however, I am not sure."

"And therefore take a year to consider it?"

"I have to consult others besides myself," she said, gravely. "Mr. Challice, I cannot tell you my reasons for such a delay, but, believe me, it is imperative. For my own part I am willing to be your wife, but, as I said before, there are others to be consulted."

"You have no relations."

"How do you know that?" replied Mrs. Ingraham, with her enigmatic smile; "believe me, I shall explain all next year."

"Then I won't see you again?"

"No! I leave town to-morrow. You must not follow, nor seek to see me. On the second Sunday of this month next year I will meet you where I met you this morning. Till then, good-bye—Lancelot."

Before he could recover from his astonishment she touched his hand lightly, and flitted quickly down the street. When she disappeared into one of the houses, with a backward glance and a gay nod, he was still rooted to the spot in amazement.

"Next year," he muttered, confusedly; "she will answer me next year and explain—explain what?"

No answer being forthcoming to this question, he took out his note-book and pencilled in the date of the meeting next year. As he went back to the Park, after making this memorandum, he met the mendicant with whom she had spoken.

"Here is a sovereign, my man," he said, with affected lightness. "Tell me what was the tongue in which you conversed with that lady?"

The giant pocketed the coin, and looked knowingly out of his wicked black eyes at his benefactor.

"Rommany, sir."

"Rommany," repeated Challice; "isn't that gypsy?"

With a wink the man turned on his heel without answering the question, and took a hasty departure. Challice, more amazed than ever, watched him walking away, and wondered what connection Mrs. Ingraham had with this wild-looking gypsy.

"She is the Sphinx," he murmured, thoughtfully; "decidedly she is the Sphinx."

She might have been, but for all that he guessed her Rommany riddle before the year was out.

CHAPTER I

THE JADE EYE

Close on nine months had elapsed since Mrs. Ingraham made that remarkable appointment with Challice. True to his promise, he neither sought her company, nor inquired her whereabouts. Such self-denial rendered him unhappy; so anxious to get through the year as comfortably as possible, he departed on his travels. In those nine months he explored the Carpathians, skirted the Black Sea, and spent some weeks in the Caucasus. By such excitements he managed to subdue his impatience fairly well. Towards the end of March he returned to England, there intending to remain until the appointed day. Before the meeting took place he found himself in Majorca.

What brought him there was a jade eye.

Jade is a hard green stone much prized by the Chinese, and this piece, sent to him through the post, was carved into the semblance of a human eye. What such an oddity had to do with Majorca he could not conceive, nor did the accompanying letter throw much light on the affair.

"To Lancelot Challice,—An important secret can be revealed by the sender of this jade eye. It concerns your past, present, and future—ignorance of it will render useless the meeting of June. Therefore be wise and brave. Come to Palma, in Majorca, and seek La Fonda del Pan Moreno. There you shall find a messenger who also carries a jade eye. Follow him and be happy."

There was no name appended to this strange document, and such an omission seemed to be intentional. An unsigned letter, a Chinese amulet—these things were redolent of mystery. Many men would have hesitated about accepting so doubtful an invitation. Challice felt no such qualms. He had met with many queer adventures during his travels, and this was apparently one of the same sort. Moreover, the secret, whatever it might be, concerned Mrs. Ingraham and the appointed meeting. This alone was sufficient to decide Challice, and a week after receiving the letter he was seated in the patio of La Fonda del Pan Moreno.

It was a picturesque inn near the cathedral, much affected by sailors, smugglers, and mountain muleteers. A band of these latter chattered in the quadrangle, and Challice, perched up in the covered gallery running round it, was trying to discern the expected messenger amid the throng.

It will be noticed that no date was mentioned in the letter. The place, but not the time of meeting, was appointed. This omission did not trouble Challice in the least. Thus far had he carried out his instructions, and had no doubt but that in due time the necessary emissary would make his appearance. There was a fine flavor of seventeenth century romance about this adventure which Challice found much to his liking. He had a drop of wild blood in his veins, and courted rather than avoided danger.

Meanwhile he cleansed himself from the dust of travel, made an excellent meal, and afterwards passed his time in observing the motley crowd below. It was like a page out of *Gil Blas.*

In this little-known place life runs much on the same lines as in past ages. Majorca savors strongly of Orientalism, and its people are averse to change. As they are now, so were they when Ferdinand was driving the Moor from Granada. The Arabs are also gone from Majorca, but they have left their traces behind, not alone in architecture, but in the habits, customs, and dress of the Mallorcan peasantry. It is a morsel of the East set down in the West, unique and fascinating in its very incongruity.

"If this messenger does not appear to-day," mused Challice, taking all this in by degrees, "I shall not be sorry. There is plenty of amusement in Palma. This mixture of Arab and Goth has

produced a curious result — neither of East nor West, but a commingling of both. Decidedly, I can pass a week very comfortably here."

He descended from the gallery and pushed his way through the crowd towards the archway of the patio. It opened on to a narrow street lined with gayly-caparisoned mules. These bore bales of merchandise and red jars of porous clay, which latter put him in mind of the "Forty Thieves." While their masters talked and drank within, the mules, impatient to be gone, stamped their feet and jingled their bells. Pigeons whirled aloft in the sunny air, or sat in white rows on the parapets of the flat-roofed houses. Over the uneven pavements glided the pretty Mallorquinas, veiled in their mantillas. The closed windows and wire rejas of the houses gave them an Eastern air. Beyond arose the mighty fabric of the cathedral dominating the scene, and over all arched the dome of azure brilliant with sunshine.

"Decidedly Eastern," thought Challice, leaning against the archway; "not unlike Cairo — bright colors, veiled women, barred houses. It only wants camels to complete the picture. How strange that it never occurred to me to come here before. Now I am here, what is going to happen? Something romantic, I fancy. The air is filled with adventures."

The adventure began for him at once. A light touch on the arm, and he turned to find a woman looking at him with a smile. At a glance he guessed she was no Mallorquina. There was an Oriental look about her dark face which reminded him strongly of Mrs. Ingraham. Moreover, she was differently dressed to all the other women he had seen. All scarlet and black was her garb, with necklace, bracelets, and ear-rings of sequins. A red handkerchief was twisted round her black locks, and a red rose showed itself behind her ear. She was all movement and life, restless as a lizard, sparkling as a diamond. More devil than angel about her, for sure.

"Carmen," said Challice, aloud, involuntarily comparing her to Merimee's heroine, "Carmen, the gypsy."

"My name is Pepa, Señor Inglis," she said, smartly, in good Spanish.

"How do you know I am English?" asked Challice, in the same tongue.

"How do you know I am gypsy!" she retorted, smartly. "Ay dios mio!—have I not been to Gibraltar? Do I not know the English lobsters with their red coats and stiff manners? Aye, and their tongue also—in part."

"You are a gypsy, I see!"

"You have sharp eyes, Englishman."

"Do you live in Palma?"

"Ask the wind where it lives," said Pepa, disdainfully. "Am I not as free as the air? Where the wind goes I go. You see well, I am a Zincallo —that answers all. Come, my delicate one, let me tel la lajo."

"La lajo?"

"The good-fortune, señor."

Challice shook his head with a laugh. It amused him to converse with this pretty savage, yet he was not inclined to encourage superstition.

"For a kiss, perhaps, but not for palmistry. I know my fortune already."

"Who knows that till death?" retorted Pepa, seizing his hand; "only the gypsy eye can see into the future. Be wise and hear what these lines say. It is good-will I bear you, else I would give no warning. By my soul, no!"

"Warning!"

"Yes! my pretty caballero. The death mark is on your brow, but it can be wiped off."

"What do you mean?" asked Challice, struck by her earnestness, though he did not believe in such juggling with the unknown. "I can be in no danger here. I know no one in Majorca, and only arrived this morning!"

"It is true, señor, but you come not of your own will."

"How do you know that?" he demanded, somewhat startled.

"Am I not a gypsy, Englishman? Bah! Who can deceive Pepa? The future is written on your hand. Come, my master, cross it with gold and I'll tell you a secret."

"No! I don't believe in fortune-telling."

The gypsy tossed away his hand with a smile of disdain.

"You hold life cheaper than gold. Beware, foolish one! Go not to the mountains; there is danger on winding roads."

"I don't intend to go to the mountains."

"That which brought you here will take you there. Up the winding road will you ride to-morrow—if you escape the first danger."

"What first danger?"

"Ho!" she exclaimed, derisively, "you give no gold and want la lago. I will tell you but this, my Busnée. Before you leave this fonda your life will be in danger. Escape that and your grave shall be on the winding road. It is written."

Startled by these sinister remarks he would have detained her, but, evading his grasp, she flitted into the court-yard with a jeering laugh.

"Little devil!" soliloquized Challice, looking after her; "she seems to know a lot. Can she have anything to do with this jade eye business? Hm!"

The adventure caused him some disquietude. Experienced as he was in reading faces and drawing deductions therefrom, he espied a menacing expression in this woman's eye which boded ill for himself. He did not believe in the superstitious jargon of gypsydom, yet the circumstances in which he was placed were sufficiently peculiar to justify his attaching some value to her words. They either conveyed a threat or a warning; and noting the savageness of her glance, he concluded it was the former. For a moment or so he pondered over the matter; but being unable, for want of evidence, to come to a conclusion, dismissed the episode from his mind. His only course was to keep a sharp look-out for possible dangers, and for the expected messenger. When he saw this latter, the meaning of all this would probably stand revealed.

"At all events," said he, reentering the patio, "I shall stay here and face out the matter. I didn't take this journey to be bamboozled in this fashion. Before I leave Majorca I shall know all or else fulfil Pepa's prophecy, and leave my bones on the winding road."

A young muleteer, seated on the stone margin of the court-yard pool, thrummed bravely at a guitar, and sang, Heaven knows what, of love and woman. Pepa occasionally showed her red skirts in the crowd, doubtless busy telling fortunes. He heard

her high-pitched voice chaffing the men, but she made no attempt to come near him. Nor did he desire such an attention, as he had no desire to fulfil her prediction by awakening the jealousy of some gypsy lover.

At first the crowd seemed good-natured enough; but with the leaven of Pepa working in the mass, such a state of things could not long continue. She, darting about like a restless Até, did her best to stir up strife, and ultimately succeeded. Loud voices began to be heard, the throng encircled itself around two fighting men, and Pepa, her purpose accomplished, scampered out of the patio with a derisive laugh.

"Little devil!" murmured Challice, applying this epithet for the second time; "why is she setting them all by the ears?"

He stepped forward to see the struggle. Scarcely had he moved when a knife whizzed past his ear, and buried its point in the wall, against which he had been leaning. Had he remained there a second longer it would have pinned him to the wood-work. At once the prediction of the gypsy flashed across his mind, and he felt convinced that he was on dangerous ground. Her prophecy, this knife throwing, were both part of the same plan, and she had done her best to fulfil the warning.

"Hm!" said Challice, thoughtfully, "I wonder if

all this is got up for my benefit." Locked in one another's arms, two men were swaying heavily to and fro. The Englishman dodged round the outskirts of the crowd to get a glimpse of the wrestlers.

"Who are they?" he inquired of his neighbor.

"Flamencos!" answered the man; then, seeing his questioner was still unenlightened, added, "Zincali."

"Oh, gypsies! Queer! Pepa is a gypsy; that knife was thrown by one of those fighting gypsies. Hm! I begin to think there's trouble ahead."

By this time the larger of the men had forced the other under, and was holding him down by the throat. He then bent forward and whispered something to his antagonist in an unknown language. Challice could only catch one word, "Jara."

"What is Jara?" asked he of his muleteer friend.

"A hag! a hag! Queen of the Cales! devil take her," replied the other, hastily crossing himself. "See how the spell works, the fight is over. Accursed Flemings, they devour not one another."

All this time the fallen man had lain prostrate under the grip of his conqueror. This latter ended his whispering, and permitted the other to rise, whereupon he made off like a deer. Evidently the speaking had more hand in this than the wrestling. His antagonist, a Herculean monster for size and muscle, parted the crowd right and left with a few strokes of his arms, and came straight to Challice.

"Are you hurt, rye? Did the knife strike?" he said, in excellent English. "Job!" catching sight of the weapon still remaining in the wall, "he missed. So much the better. I should have had his heart had he slain you, brother."

"Who are you, and why do you call me brother?" demanded Challice, both astonished and annoyed at this speech.

"My name is Goliath Hicks," replied the gypsy, leading Challice out of ear-shot of the crowd; "I call you brother because you also carry this."

He produced a jade eye and held it up between finger and thumb for the inspection of Challice. The Englishman, without making reply, took the other jade eye out of his pocket and compared it. In all respects they were similar.

"Two eyes, brother," said Goliath, cheerfully. "You can see in the dark now."

"I can see that you are the person whom I was to meet here, but I am still ignorant of your reason for calling me brother."

"All in good time, rye! I shall tell you all during the journey to-morrow."

"What journey to-morrow?"

"Why, the journey over the mountains, to be sure. Don't we search for the land of Egypt at dawn? It's true, my pal. The devil be in my soul if I lie."

The words of Pepa again recurred to Challice. The

first part of her prediction had been fulfilled; why not the second? Moreover, this man, though professing to explain all, revealed nothing. Challice returned the jade eye to his pocket with a stamp of annoyance.

"I don't intend to move from here without an explanation," he said, resolutely.

"At the end of the journey there is one who can explain, brother. The jade eye came from her, you—"

"From 'Her!'" repeated Challice, sharply; "is it then a woman who sent the message?"

"Aye, brother."

"And her name is Ingraham—Isaia Ingraham."

"Job! It is not that, rye. It is an old woman whom you shall see. The Mother of all the Cales! Your mother and mine, brother."

"What do you mean by this parrot cry of mother and brother? Who are you?"

"Goliath Hicks! I am a Rommany of England—well known on the Kent roads, brother. I saw you nine months ago."

"Ah," said the young man, suddenly enlightened. "I thought your face was familiar; you are the beggar who spoke to Mrs. Ingraham."

"It is true, brother. I swear it is so."

This new discovery set the wits of Challice to work. He began to see a connection between this

Majorca episode and Mrs. Ingraham. Evidently she had to do with the sending of the jade eye, and required his presence on the island. For what purpose he could not conjecture, still less that she should envelop the affair in mystery.

"I always said she was a Sphinx," was his comment on these thoughts. Meanwhile Goliath, too civil to interrupt his meditations, was eying him interrogatively. Then, when he raised his head,

"You will come with me to Egypt, brother?"

"To Egypt," repeated Challice, vaguely; "does one travel to Egypt *via* Majorca?"

"Not that Egypt, brother. Egypt of the Cales beyond the mountains. Few know where it is and none enter it save those of our blood. You go to it to-morrow, and that is why I call you brother, my Rommany Rye."

"I! Do you mean to say I am a gypsy?"

"Aye, brother! If you were not, who would ask you to come hither to Egypt! Not Jara."

"But, my good fellow, you are talking nonsense. I know my pedigree for hundreds of years, but never to my knowledge did I have a gypsy ancestor."

Goliath scratched his chin, and looked sharply at the handsome face of the young man.

"Blue eyes, yellow hair," said he, staring hard; "you look a gorgio, but the Rommany drop is in

your blood. You couldn't get to Egypt else. Can tute raker Rommany?"

"What language is that?"

"Rommany. I ask you if you can speak it?"

"Never heard of it before," said Challice, bluntly. "I thought you gypsies spoke gibberish."

"Ho! ho! Why, brother, we speak the oldest language in the world."

"I'm quite in the dark about this business, Goliath. I was called from England, I know not why, and yet you don't seem able to explain things."

"The Mother of the Cales alone can do so. But if you knew nothing, brother, why did you come here?"

"For reasons of my own; but I am not certain that I shall go on with this adventure."

"Why not, pal?"

"For one thing. Pepa warned me against the winding road."

Goliath started on hearing this remark, and pinched his chin between thumb and forefinger in a meditative fashion.

"Pepa and Pharoah," he muttered, anxiously; "what lay are they on now? I must tell Jara." Then aloud, with sudden conviction, "There's no danger on the road, rye. You are safe with me."

"How do I know that?"

"Job! Why should I harm my brother, my pal?

Dog does not eat dog! Are we not of the gentle Rommany both?"

For some moments Challice held his peace, weighing in his own mind the for and against of this proposition. Of a remarkably temerarious disposition, he courted rather than avoided danger. This was an adventure after his own heart. Its danger only enhanced its attractiveness. Also, it was connected in some way with Mrs. Ingraham. These considerations turned the scale in favor of Goliath, and he accepted the gypsy's guidance with certain reservations.

"I accept, Goliath. But I won't travel by night, and you must ride in front."

"Master, it shall be so. From dawn till dark will we ride, I before, you in the tail."

"Good! I will come to-morrow. But remember, Goliath, I carry a revolver, and know how to use it. Any tricks on your part, my friend—"

"Right! right! Do what you will. It's a bargain, rye. My life for your safety."

CHAPTER II

THE WINDING ROAD

"Good-morning, brother."

"Good-morning, Goliath. I see you have brought the mules."

"Better mules there are not, rye. Over the mountains they will bear us like the wind. Are you ready for the journey, brother?"

Challice grew meditative. The answer to so pertinent a question required some consideration.

"Yes!" said he, at length; "I do not embark on this journey unprepared. My breakfast is over; I have purse and pistol. Also," he added, with emphasis, "the fullest intention of keeping my eyes open."

"Tute needn't be attrash."

"I don't understand Rommany, my friend."

"I said you needn't be afraid. Are you not a Chal and a brother?"

"You say so," replied the young man, dryly. "However, we can discuss that during the journey."

"Mount, then, rye! By the middle hour we shall

be at Soller. Egypt may see us when the owl is out."

In a few moments they were jogging along suburban roads on their way to Egypt. Where that might be Challice had no idea, so he surrendered himself entirely to the guidance of Goliath. There was something trustworthy about the swarthy face of the man, and Challice was satisfied that he wished him no ill. As they rode through the fresh morning air Goliath—evidently of a talkative turn of mind—kept up a continuous monologue. His companion, less light-hearted, listened absently, and at length became so engrossed in his own thoughts as to pay no attention to such idle out-pourings.

This adventure smacked of Dumas's romances. With no hard and fast beginning, Challice questioned whether it had an end. Withal, every step was fraught with mystery. Beyond guiding him to Egypt, the gypsy by his side had as little idea of what it all meant as himself. Had he been set down on another planet he could not have been more ignorant of his surroundings. He knew not Majorca, he was quite in the dark as to the purport of the journey, scarcely was he acquainted with Goliath. In fiction such blindness would have been judged unnatural, yet here it was in real life, with Challice for hero. Challice, who prided himself on his knowledge of life, Challice the shrewd, distrustful

man of the world, yet withal Challice who, on insufficient grounds, followed a doubtful guide into a doubtful country.

Goliath had promised to tell him all he knew, and though Challice guessed it was of no great importance, he nevertheless questioned the gypsy with considerable astuteness. At the first pause in his companion's monologue he seized the opportunity of cross-examination.

"This road goes to Miramar, brother," said Goliath; "but we turn off yonder to climb the mountains. From thence we look down on Soller. Ho! ho! they fear the Chals in Soller. Beyond is Pingh Major, the high hill. Egypt is there."

"Egypt, Goliath?"

"A city, my brother. A city of caves, hidden in a gorge of the hills. The home of those who have no home. The resting-place of the Chals."

"And its name?"

"It has no name, master. There is a spell over the city, and the name may not be spoken. If it were known and told then would the Rommany lose their home."

"It has a name, then?"

"Some say one thing, some say another! I say nothing. For me it is a nameless city. I call it Egypt, but it is not Egypt."

"I never heard of a gypsy city before, Goliath. Your race generally live in tents."

"Few know that Egypt exists save the Chals, brother. It is the nest of our people, and there dwells the Mother of the Cales."

"Then the precise locality is supposed to be kept secret?"

Goliath cracked his whip smartly, to intimate that secrecy was a matter of indifference.

"The Busnées know it, brother, but they come not near. City of Devils is their name for it. It would be if they entered our gates. The spells are powerful there, rye."

"Surely you don't believe in such superstitions?"

"Aye, brother! It is in my blood. Dukkeripens are true."

"Dukkeripens?"

"The Rommany for fate-telling, pal. Stars, hands, cards!—they cannot lie. I believe in what is, rye. It is written."

By this time they were climbing the mountains. Seized with sudden dismay lest he might not see Palma again, Challice halted his mule to look down on the fair country below. The plains stretching to the city were covered with orange groves, lemon-trees, and aromatic shrubs. Palma, with its background of sea, melting imperceptibly into sky, glim-

mered fairy-like through morning mists. Over the mountain-road palms and gray olive-trees dipped from crumbling banks, stayed by lichened stones. The air breathed perfumes, and the sun burned hotly on the white dust under the feet of their mules. To live in this enchanting land is to enter paradise without dying. The rarefied atmosphere exhilarated like champagne, and inspired Challice to causeless laughter, Goliath to a burst of song.

"I rakei adro lo lolo gad," sang the giant, cracking his whip to the melody.

"What does that mean?" interrupted Challice.

"The girl in the red chemise, pal. A gay Rommany song, is it not?"

"Very! Written on Pepa, I presume. She is as scarlet as a cardinal."

"Pepa," said Goliath, reflectingly. "Tell me, brother, do you know anything of Pepa?"

"No more than that she told me her name, and offered to reveal the future. I refused, whereupon she warned me to beware of death."

"Ah, chovihani," murmured the gypsy; "it is as I thought. You wished Jativo to kill the rye."

"The deuce! This becomes interesting. Who is Jativo?"

"He who fought with me, brother. I saw him sling the navaja and tried to prevent him doing so. It was too late; but as you moved in time all was

well. Then I fought and conquered, and bade him fly in the name of Jara."

"Why should Jativo wish to kill me?"

"I know not, brother. He is the rom of Pepa, a lord of the horseshoe. What the gorgios call a blacksmith. It is she, rye, not he."

"You mean to say that she wants me killed?"

"Job! I do, brother. But never fear; I shall conduct you safely to Egypt. There none dare harm you."

Challice eyed his companion doubtfully. That narrow escape from death daunted his spirit, the more so as he could not conjecture the reason for Pepa's dislike. Apparently he was environed by perils, their very invisibility adding to their menace. So oddly was the man constituted that the nearer the danger the higher rose his courage to meet and baffle it.

"Yet Pepa warned me particularly against the winding road," said he, in objection to the last remark.

"Bad," ejaculated Goliath, shaking his head. "We come to the winding road when Soller is behind us. There we must feel our eyes, pal. You have the pistol? Good! It may be useful to give the lie to Pepa's fortune-telling."

"Pepa again."

"And Jativo! Duvel! Queer things are about, brother. I sha'n't be sorry when we get to Egypt."

They arrived at Soller on the stroke of noon. A sleepy town in a sleepy valley, lethargic with heat and idleness. In the almost deserted streets reigned a Sabbatic stillness. The stream bisecting the mass of dilapidated houses murmured hoarsely, and an occasional song broke forth from some hidden corner. Grass grew plentifully in the streets, and but few figures moved over the pavements. Even the arrival of strangers roused but little curiosity in this somnolent hamlet, and the travellers clattered almost unnoticed into the central square.

"The Garden of Sleep," quoth Challice, dismounting.

Outside a hospederia, under the very shadow of Pingh Major, Challice ate some eggs, bread, and grapes. These, with thin red wine, were all the provisions procurable in this place, and were brought by the host for his exclusive use. Goliath was studiously neglected; and seemingly accustomed to such treatment, devoured black bread and garlic sausage produced from one of his capacious pockets. Over this hermit's fare he grinned at the host, who scowled savagely in return, but not without a suspicion of dread in his eye.

"Go, evil one," cried he, shaking his fist at the gypsy. "Get hence to the City of Devils, and leave us in peace."

"Jek—ani—trin—schtar," shrieked Goliath, and

springing on his mule set off at full gallop. The innkeeper, believing the gypsy had cast a spell, howled with terror and ran inside. Challice coming up with Goliath, found him laughing.

"Ho! ho! my brother, what a foolish Busno; I did but count one, two, three, four, in Hungarian Rommany, and he thinks I have bewitched him. Holy water and the Pope for that one to-night."

"You have a fine reputation here, Goliath," said Challice, laughing at the trick.

"Aye, brother! It is good, so. Fear of the evil eye keeps these Busnée from our city."

"Where is the city now?"

"Yonder, pal. Where the hill frowns in the sunshine."

He waved his hand towards the shadow of Pingh Major. The horn of the mountain thrust itself defiantly upward in the rarefied atmosphere, and showed here and there patches of snow. They rode along a level road between lines of date palms; farther on orange-trees hung over the crumbling walls, dropping balls of gold. A few of the six-armed windmills, peculiar to Majorca, ended the suburbs of Soller, and from thence a zigzag road wound upward.

"The winding road, Goliath."

"It is so, master. But fear not; my life for your life."

Despite this confident assurance Challice could not help glancing uneasily from side to side as they climbed the mountain. To the right the road looked down on the fertile valley and gray mass of Soller houses, but the left was rich with thickly foliaged trees, which might well hide a foe. What if he were to fall into an ambush? He congratulated himself on making Goliath ride in front, as if the gypsy intended treachery he would fall into his own trap.

"Another three hours and we see Egypt, my brother. To-night you will sleep in our nest, and to-morrow ride back to Palma. Such a sight you will see as you never saw before."

"What is that, Goliath?"

"Mother Jara, brother, the Queen of the Cales. Over a hundred years old, and wise as Suliman bin Daoud."

"Hm!" Challice was sceptical on the point of the lady's age, but not wishing to enter into a discussion with Goliath, turned the conversation with a question he had frequently determined to ask.

"How is it you speak such good English, Goliath?"

"It is my profession, brother. I am a Crocus—what you call a cheap-jack. Herb medicine I deal in on the road. I must speak well to sell well. There's nothing wins the gorgios like gab. Bad patter means bad business."

"Have you a wife?"

"Aye, brother! My romi is in England. One of the London Lovels she is. I have one chabo—a brave lass. She can pen dukkerin rarely."

"You mean she can tell fortunes?"

"Truly, brother."

Goliath, not disposed to talk about his domestic affairs, hinted as much by the reserve of his tone and manner. Quick in observation Challice noticed such reticence, and harked back to his own concerns.

"Is Mrs. Ingraham a gypsy, Goliath?"

"Anan, brother?"

"The lady to whom you spoke that day."

"I know not, brother," replied Goliath, doubtfully. "She can rakker Rommany. I know no more."

"Have you ever seen her in Egypt?"

"Never, brother! Dorai! I can answer no more questions. The Mother will say that which she wishes to say. Let us pad the hoof. That's thieves' speech for what I now do."

He urged his mule forward, and speedily turning a corner of the road was hidden from sight. Not wishing to be left behind in so dangerous a locality Challice lost no time in following his example. He made but one comment on the preceding conversation.

"I can find out nothing from this man. But what can Mrs. Ingraham have to do with Majorca and gypsies?"

Speaking thus, he cast up his eyes to the sky, as though demanding an answer. Instead of the firmament he saw green leaves, and noted that he was riding under the branches of a large cork-tree stretching its boughs across the road. Furthermore, a gleam of sunshine glinted on the barrel of a rifle protruding from the foliage.

"Goliath!" cried Challice, loudly, and forced his mule onward.

As he did so a jet of red fire spouted out of the rifle-barrel. He felt a stunning blow on the back of his head, and confusedly heard the shouts of Goliath galloping back, as, with a sensation of sickness, he fell off his mule. After that the world became a blank.

It looked as though the second prophecy of Pepa had proved truer than the first.

CHAPTER III

THE SIBYL

As from a troubled dream he woke to the actualities of life. He knew not the breadth of intervening time, nor comprehended as yet the strange circumstances of his position. Struck down on the sun-scorched road, he opened his eyes in a haze of twilight dashed with recurrent flashes of flame. A skin spread on bare earth formed his couch, and the fitful flarings revealed a rugged roof, and rudely-sculptured walls. With every gush of light grotesque visages started from the prolific gloom, to fit in only too aptly with his sick fancies. Through the acridity of the close atmosphere streamed at intervals a current of snow-cooled air, touching with chilly caress his hot cheeks and dry lips.

Cave, skins, images—these hints of barbarism by their very incompleteness gained in terror, so that every fragment leaping momentarily from the dimness increased his qualmish fears. The monstrous fantasy of such surroundings weighed him down with nightmare paralysis, and his confused brain could in nowise grasp their meaning, if, indeed, this

phantasmagoria had a meaning other than the fancies of delirium.

"Where am I?" he muttered, trying to raise himself. "Where am—"

The effort was too great, and his head, throbbing with pain, rolled back on the pillow. Over him bent a wrinkled face, scarred as those carven marks he had seen aforetime. Round his neck slipped a bony arm, and a cup brim brushed his lips. With the bitter draught a wave of sleep obliterated his half-conscious visions, and he fell into a disturbed slumber, peopled with figments of disjointed dreams. Again he awoke, this time with clear head and a due perception of all around him.

It was still dark, but the red light, with less capricious glimmerings, illuminated a cavern of no very great extent. Skins of animals covered the floor, figured curtains hung between the caryatides, rude stools and chests sparsely furnished the place. In a rock-hewn space blazed a fire of olive-wood, the light of which served to reveal such barbarism. Before it, chin on hand, elbow on knee, crouched a woman crooning some lamentable strain, with constant repetitions of the same melody. Challice, disquieted at the sight, raised himself slightly, the better to see her, whereupon she turned, still murmuring.

For the moment he thought her a creature of dream, for surely no human being possessed so weird

a face, so grotesquely terrible a head. Lean as a skull it was, with peaked chin and beaked nose, and a skin loose and yellow, puckered into a myriad wrinkles. Under a red handkerchief straggled wisps of white hair, and as from hollow caverns gleamed fierce eyes, filmed like those of an eagle. Huddled shapelessly in the red light, she looked as though her century of years were slowly but steadily crushing her downward to the grave. Too long had she cumbered the earth, and Time, wrath at such vitality, forced her downward to the under world.

"Jara!" whispered Challice, half to himself. Low as was his voice she heard it, and gathering herself up into the semblance of a woman, tottered forward with a toothless smile.

"Jara I am, son," she mumbled, in good Spanish. "Mother of the Cales these many years. How feel you, child?"

"Better, much better! My head is clear."

"Hah! Death, I cheat thee again. Jara's herbs, Jara's wisdom close any grave, though widely it may gape. Take this cup of wine, my son. It will restore strength and complete the cure. Sunlight dwells in the grape," she continued, as he drank greedily; "it speeds the blood through the veins. Aye! aye! Well do I know its virtue. The sun for life, the moon for death. That to thee, this to me."

So murmuring she squatted close to the bear-skin, shaking her head. The draught refreshed Challice so much that in a few moments he sat up to ask questions. As was natural, his thoughts immediately reverted to the episode of the winding road.

"Was it Jativo?" he demanded, eagerly.

"Jativo, my son! Child of Satan as he is. But for Goliath, his hands on your throat would have finished the gun's work. The bullet but grazed your head. Naught, it is naught, Chavi. Many have been farther on the unseen road than thee, yet has Jara guided them back to sunlight."

"My life has been twice threatened."

"True, dear child. There shall be no third time. My red cloak is about your feet—none dare touch what that protects."

"And Pepa?"

"Jativo and Pepa! Rom and Romi! Heed them not, my child. I deal with them after the manner of my people."

"That, of course, is none of my business," retorted Challice, rendered somewhat savage by his late misfortune. "All I wish is to be left alone, and to be told the reason of my being requested to come to Majorca. Who was it that sent for me?"

He had a lurking hope that the answer might be "Mrs. Ingraham," but in place of this the old woman made an astonishing reply.

"I, child. It was I who sent for you. Is it not right that the granddame should see the grandson?"

"Granddame! Grandson! What mummery is this?"

"Truly, child, you are of my kin."

"Kin of yours?"

"Aye, it is so. I am thy great-granddame."

In angry astonishment Challice stared at the withered oracle. Many ideas had occurred to him relative to the secret, but this truth, if truth it were, transcended his wildest imaginings. That a Rommany ancestor should be thus clapped into his pedigree appeared no less improbable than ludicrous. The family-tree, as he knew it, gave no hint of so wild a twig, and preferring documentary to verbal evidence, he rejected the statement as false. So moved to wrath was the man by this, as it appeared to him, astonishing fiction that in some degree he lost his temper.

"You are talking nonsense," said he, with marked acrimony.

"Hey!" ejaculated his hostess, in a higher key. "Is it nonsense to have royal blood in your veins—to be kin to the gentle Rommany?"

"I tell you it is absurd," persisted Challice. "I saw my grandmother many times during her life. If looks go for anything, she was an Englishwoman."

"A gorgio, my son—a rani of the Gentiles. Aye! aye! false blood there. But your grandfather—"

"Was Mark Challice," interrupted he, a vision crossing his mind of a bluff Saxon personality, pink and white, and yellow haired. "Surely you can't say he was Rommany?"

For answer Jara threw up her skinny arms with a low chuckle. It might have signified pleasure, but it sounded somewhat demoniacal.

"Your babus chavi was my son." Then seeing a bewildered look on his face, substituted Spanish for Rommany. "Your grandfather was my son."

"I don't understand!"

"Listen, child; I am a great old witch! I know many things. A hundred and ten years have I burdened the earth. Death has forgotten Jara! Ay, mi Dios, what stories could I tell, miri kamli—true as your eyes. It was I who penned dukkerin to the tiny one. Great good-fortune did I promise him. Crowns of gold and bloody victories, but death in the distant isle. Aromali," she continued, reflectively, "he was a great gorgio, that one."

"Who?" asked Challice; whereat she lifted her head with a proud gesture.

"Who but Napoleon, child? The great one! He knew all he was to be when I read his hand, yet he was naught in those days."

"You foretold the fortune of Napoleon?"

"Truly, son. So can you judge what weary years are mine. Queen of the Chals for nigh a hundred years. Soon shall there be a new Mother, but not Pepa!—no! no! not Pepa."

"And my grandfather?" questioned Challice, bringing her back to the point from whence she was wandering.

"My child, son—aye, my only child! Late in life did I become a mother, when my rom was killed in the wars of the French (cursed be their nation!). My tiny bird became a strong-winged hawk, and sought far lands. Aye, a true Rommany was my son. Egypt nor I could not hold him, and our brethren everywhere knew his handsome face (accursed be that face, which brought him ruin!). In London he saw a rani of the Gentiles who loved him for that face. She left the Busnée (may lightning blast them!), and became his romi after our gypsy fashion. One chalo had they, and then her father (earth crush his bones!) lured her heart from the gentle Rommany. With the son of my son she fled to the roof of her kin (may they tire as oxen hereafter!), and left my child to die of weariness. Aye, sweet soul! he died; but she, the accursed Busno, married with a gorgio."

"With Mark Challice?"

"Even so, quick-wit, even so!—with the gorgio did she wed. He held as his blood the son of my

son, nor was it known that the Rommany drop was in the veins of the chalo. That was your father, pretty one."

"My father, then, was your grandson?"

"True! true! Why should I lie to thee, who art of my blood? I am thy great-granddame, and thou the son of my son's son."

"What became, then, of my real grandfather?"

"He died, child, died! No drao there but a sick heart. That Busnée wife had cast a spell on mouth and eyes (accursed be her and her dead!). But he, the son of my son, was brought with much care to manhood as the child of Mark Challice (burn him!), and none knew the truth save I, Jara of the Cales. The child-thief died, the child grew fair, and wedded with a Busnée woman. They, my own heart, were thy parents. Thou hast the wild blood in thee, sick one, and art the son of my son's son. To tell this did I draw thee to Egypt, for I would fain see flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone, ere I die."

"A strange story!" was the comment of Challice, when she ceased speaking.

"Aye, very strange," assented the hag, indifferently. "Say I lie, if it so please you, but the truth stands hard in spite of words. My blood is in your veins —the Rommany drop that sent you roaming over broad rolling seas these many years. Ay, mi Dios! are

you not the son of my son's son? Diddikai are you only, but your handsome talus was a true blood Calo. Baro duvel! in what body now hides my true love's soul?"

So wailing, she subsided into a heap on the floor, a huddle of clothes and nerveless limbs, scarce having anything in common with humanity. At times her lips babbled gypsy terms of endearment, but otherwise there was no sign of life. Heaven only knows across what weary desert of years she sent her thoughts, travelling back to middle age and motherhood. In her time-worn body still beat a mother's heart, in her dulled brain still lurked the memory of a dead face, limned afresh with startling distinctness by the presence of her descendant.

On his side, Challice was not unwilling to be left to his own thoughts. Hard of belief as was the tale, yet he was disposed to give it credence. From the incidents of his past life he adduced a hundred evidences of its truth. The Challice family had been stay-at-home country squires for centuries, but with his father and himself a new strain entered into the somnolent race. An inbred desire for roaming governed their lives, so what was this but the outcome of that unsuspected gypsy element? In a South American forest his father perished under the savage arrow, and he on several occasions escaped by the merest good-fortune a similar fate. Ever since he

could remember a restless spirit had stirred him to incessant wanderings. He was what the Spaniards aptly term an "aficionado," and felt himself drawn towards barbaric life. Sky and tent he preferred to house and bed, nor had his wealth served him in any way except to gratify his love of travel. Prairie mustang, ocean tramp, pedestrian knapsack, he knew, and loved them well. From the time he played truant at school to this latest journey to Majorca, he had devoted himself to exploration. Cities had no charm for his nature; but woods, seas, plains, mountains, these lured him to their solitudes with resistless charm. Often he wondered at the ingrained savagery of his nature, unaware of its source. This was the truth. He was a Rommany, a born wanderer, and the wild blood of the Cales running in his veins overwhelmed the feebler current of the gorgio. A Challice he was not, save in name, and that by accident.

"It must be true," said he aloud, thus thinking out the question.

The old woman's eyes lit up. "Aye, it is true, child," she muttered; "it is true as the stars. Blue eyes and yellow locks you have, as any gorgio, but the gypsy eye is in your head—the eye to curse and blight."

"Ah!" cried Challice, with sudden recollection, "what the Neapolitan said is true. I am a jettatura."

"He! he! my son! I know that word. You have the evil eye, and can blight at will."

"Pah! I don't believe in such superstition."

"Aye! There spoke the white blood of the Busnée. Would that Pharaoh's bullet had wrung it from your heart."

"I've lost quite enough blood in that way," returned Challice, dryly, "and I warn you, mother, if I meet Pharaoh in your city I shall thrash him within an inch of his life."

"Brave! brave! Do what you will, my son, but first gain strength. Pharaoh is strong."

"How long must I remain here?"

"A day only, child. It was but four of the sun yesterday when you fell wounded, and soon it will be dawn. Fifteen hours have you lain there. But the herbs of Jara can cure you soon. By noon to-day you can walk in the city; but touch not Pharaoh, my son, till two days pass."

"You evidently don't mind my thrashing one of your subjects."

"Naught—it is naught," said Jara; "he has sinned, so let him be punished."

"I suppose I can return to Palma when I please?"

"When you please, child. But be wise, and remain for some days. Who knows what the future may hold?"

"By-the-way, how did you know of my meeting of next June?"

"I know many things. A great old witch is Jara."

"Do you know Mrs. Ingraham?"

"Anan, my son?"

"The lady whom I am to meet."

"What? I know, I know! Time will reveal what I care not to tell. Come, son, drink this cup. It will send the brave blood through those stalwart limbs."

"But, mother—"

"Nay, my sick one! To-morrow or to-day I will tell you. Drink! drink, or the fever may slay thee. Who fights with Death has a strong foe."

Thus adjured Challice drank off the medicine, and began to grow drowsy. The fire, now sinking low, sent out fitful jets of flame, and Jara again, huddled before the blaze, crooned her ditty. With the dreary melody in his ear he sank to sleep, and lost all knowledge of the cave, the hag, the conversation in dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER IV

THE CITY OF THE CHAI

CHALLICE found himself in danger of becoming decivilized. Influenced by the surrounding primevalism he retrograded, in no small degree, towards the condition of prehistoric man. The tension of the brain keyed up to civilized pitch, relaxed with inconceivable rapidity, and the resulting flaccidness narrowed his desires to the merest necessities of life. Shelter and fire, clothing and food, these were all sufficient to his present simplicity. Existence was thus reduced to its original elements, and the body so long tyrannized over by the brain in its turn became master. Never entirely assimilated to modern artificialities, Challice the Gentile gave place without difficulty to Challice the Rommany. Unchecked by social usages, the man slipped back into the golden age of unvexed tranquillity. Custom, environment—by such slight threads are we withheld from barbarism.

This transmutation was not accomplished in a day, and close on a week elapsed before he felt the change in any noticeable degree. Yet so marked

became the preponderance of body over mind that even in so narrow a space he was conscious of the degradation. Heaven knows to what animal state he might have fallen had not an accident drawn him back to the higher planes of existence. Not without many struggles did he recover his freedom, but in the end he beat back the indwelling beast to its natural subjection.

Jara rightly foretold the time of his recovery. Her herbal remedies baffled the fever, and in twenty-four hours the cure was effected, although quite a week passed before he regained his normal strength. Keen mountain air, simple diet, constant exercise, so reinvigorated his frame that he felt stronger than before his illness. No restraint was placed on his movements, and accompanied by Goliath he roamed freely about the lonely hills. Otherwise than in such rambles he had little pleasure in his sojourn, for the monstrous fantasy of the city conduced to morbid thoughts. But for the cheerful animalism of Goliath, he would have grown melancholy in the nightmare atmosphere. Such companionship saved his spirits, it may be his reason.

His actual experience of the place dated from the time he found Goliath sitting beside his pillow. Jara, with other ill dreams, have vanished with darkness, and he rejoiced to see this familiar face in the dusky sunlight.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"The Mother is with Pharaoh, brother. She has cured you, and now must she punish him."

"And Pepa also?"

"Pepa! Job! Pepa goes free, witch that she is. The worst fares best. But wet not your eyes, brother. Her punishment some day will come—through you."

"Through me?"

"Aye, brother. How, I can't tell you, but it is written so."

While thus conversing Goliath brought the young man grapes, bread, and a cup of wine. Challice, hungry with prolonged fasting, greatly enjoyed this singular meal. At its conclusion he laved face and hands in ice-cold water, dressed slowly with the gypsy's assistance, and proposed to go out into the sunshine.

"Truly, it is mountain air you require," assented Goliath. "Jara's herbs, God's breath, and your own love of life; these will cure you."

"I feel better already, brother."

"Job!" cried the gypsy, smiting his huge hands together, "he knows the truth and calls me brother."

"If what Jara says is true."

"Aye, it is true. You are a Chal, and my brother. Fair as a gorgio you are, but the glossy eye of Egypt is in your head. I wish you could speak gentle Rommany, brother."

"You must teach me, Goliath."

"Surely, rye! You shall be master of the word before we part."

"How long am I to stay here?"

"So long as it pleases you. Job! Do you think we jail our brothers?"

"No, no! But Jara wishes me to stay."

"Obey her, my brother. The Mother of the Cales has wise words for quick ears."

"I intend to stay, Goliath. Not so much for Jara's asking, as for a reason of my own."

"You talk of the rani, rye?"

"Of Mrs. Ingraham? Yes, I believe she is connected with this place—with the gypsies, and with this secret."

"Did Jara not reveal the secret?"

"Not all of it. She said I was a half-bred Rommany, but there are more revelations to come, and these concern Mrs. Ingraham."

"It may be that you speak truly, brother. She will tell all at her own time. Ask me nothing, for I know nothing. I only guess."

"But, Goliath—"

"Nay, nay, my tiny brother! Ask no questions."

Anxious as was Challice for information, he could not resist this appeal. The man spoke earnestly; so repressing his curiosity, the Englishman yielded the point without further remark.

"Come, then, Goliath," said he, turning the conversation, "show me the city, and tell me the meaning of these strange images."

"These, brother, were the idols of our fathers."

"You do not worship them?"

"Nay, brother, I worship nothing! When I die, I die! Sun, soul, song, they are not in the black earth."

"A terrible belief!"

"Show me a better, brother, and I believe. But you know what I know, and who knows more? It may be that Jara is wiser. She is old and sees into the future, but not through the veil which hangs between life and death."

"Where do these idols come from?" asked Challice, unwilling to prolong the discussion.

"Our fathers brought them from India, brother. We are men of Zend, they say—the Zincali; but who knows if this be true? Our fathers' fathers came from far lands—it may be that Egypt saw the beginning of the journey. But of this," he concluded, indifferently, "I have no knowledge."

The huge images before which they stood were of red sandstone, carved into grotesque semblances of humanity. They inspired horror rather than mirth, and Challice understood from experience how the feeling deepened with the darkness. That delirious riot of firelight shadow and visage recurred so

vividly to his brain that, with a shudder, he hastily drew Goliath from the unholy place.

"I cannot stay here," he declared, decisively; "those monstrosities are sufficient to shake the nerves of the strongest. Let me live with you, Goliath."

"All I have is yours, brother. But my cave is poorer than Jara's."

"Do you all live in caves?" asked Challice, listlessly.

"Truly, brother! Foxes in holes we are. But who would think so who saw this?" He alluded to the cyclopean erection behind them. Undressed stones, based on a broad platform, were rudely piled one on the other as to form a dwarfish wall, pierced by a rugged gateway. The portal narrowed slightly towards the lintel, after the Egyptian conception of an arch, and on either side woman-bosomed sphinxes looked down a shallow staircase. From this elevation a causeway inclining upward stretched towards a white veil wavering down a precipice, which ended the vista. Squat, flat-roofed houses of red sandstone lined either side in sullen rows, and above these slaggy volcanic rock sloped backward to the menacing peaks.

"Look, brother!" said Goliath, in the character of cicerone, "this is the gorge in the hills. Here are our burrows protected by red rocks. The caves within are many and large."

"You get little sunlight here, I fear!"

"It is true, brother. But at noon the rays blaze so strongly that the rocks retain the heat till night. In summer a furnace were cooler than the gorge at midday. Then are we glad of our cool hollows."

"And that white veil yonder. A water-fall?"

"Surely, rye! There the gorge is hollowed to a cup. The water, fed by snow, falls into the depths of the earth. Once it raged down the street, and poured through Jara's cavern to the lands below."

"I see no outlet," said Challice, staring at the wall built from side to side.

"Look behind you, brother. The cave opens to the outer world. All who would enter Egypt must come through the cave of Jara. She knows who comes, who goes; and thus it is well with us."

This explanation accounted for the constant streams of cold air. The cavern piercing the mountains formed a tunnel into the gorge, through which flowed the currents, and here at this natural entrance sat Jara, like Sin at the Gates of Hell. There was something grand about the magnitude and desolation of this giant portal, with its withered porteress.

"Is there no other way of getting into the gorge?" asked Challice, as they walked up the street.

"None, brother. One is surely sufficient. Who can climb yon peaks to surprise our mysteries? Who can enter through the cave without Jara

knowing their errand? Oh, we are safe here, rye, till the day of doom."

"Unless the name of the city be known," hinted Challice, mindful of their former conversation.

"Aye, brother, that is truth," replied the gypsy, seriously. "Whoso reveals the name brings evil to Egypt. But there is no danger. Jara alone knows the name, and she speaks not!"

As they climbed slowly up the incline Challice noted and remarked that this street of tombs was quite deserted.

"In the Cup are the people, brother," explained Goliath; "they wait the punishment of Jativo!"

"No torturing, I hope," said Challice, hastily.

"Nay, brother. It is not our custom to mar the body. Jativo hates work, and therefore will be set a heavy task."

"An easy punishment."

"Not to Jativo. He would rather have his head broken in a fight than shoe a gry. Up in his cavern yonder he must now labor at the anvil."

"What about Pepa?"

"She will go free, brother. Indeed, who can restrain the wind? Pepa roams far and wide. From Gibraltar to the Pyrenees is she known. The devil was born when she saw light."

"Is she a favorite?"

"With the Busnée only. They do not know her

evil ways as we do. As the ambitious witch—she would be Queen of the Cales hereafter."

"Has she any chance of becoming so?"

"Who knows!" responded Goliath, indifferently. "It is as Jara wills it. She to whom Jara reveals the name of the city becomes our Mother — none can rule who knows not the name.

"Have you no king?"

"Every family has its head, brother. There are kings and queens in plenty, but Jara is the Queen of all the Cales from west to east. We have no king with a like power."

This folk-lore conversation was interrupted by an exclamation from Challice as they emerged into the cup of the gorge. Here the rocks, rising abruptly to the serrated peaks, formed a complete circle, broken by street entrance and falling torrent. A fine spray arose from the chasm into which the latter plunged, and a hollow roaring reverberated through the gulch. As in the street, a girdle of houses ran round the circle, stopping short at the water-fall. In the centre arose a small pyramid of shining black basalt.

"A strange place," said Challice; "a murderous-looking place."

The epithet described it accurately. It was murderous-looking. No tree, herbage, or even grass clothed the naked ribs of the mountain. Only ap-

peared the red-hued houses, barren gray rocks, their distorted peaks sharply defined against the blue, and over such desolation an arch of empty sky, vacant of bird or sunshine. A cutting wind whirled down the iron bleakness with whistle and moan. With slag and torrent, and terrific heights, it was as a haunt of damned souls.

"Here," muttered Challice, appalled by the outlook, "here must Melancholia hold her seat—surely the City of Dreadful Night were less lamentable."

"'Tis sad, brother, 'tis sad," rejoined Goliath, glancing around. "Yet none live here save Jara—from all the lands come our brethren hither. Once in his or her life must a gypsy visit Egypt, but only a time do they abide. They come, they go, but Jara remains fixed as yon pyramid."

"Is it a tomb?"

"Nay, brother; it is the storehouse of our treasures. All who come here bring offerings; in that monument are they stored. Its sides mirror the stars, and its base rests on golden foundations."

"What a city of mysteries!"

"Truly, rye, you are not far wrong, but Jara holds the key to them all. See you, brother, yonder water-fall?"

"What of it?"

"Behind that veil sit the mummies of our rulers. When Jara dies, thither must she go."

"But how can you get behind the torrent?"

"That, brother, is also a mystery."

Even as he spoke there was a sound of many voices, the noise of many feet, and, as rabbits from a burrow, men and women thronged into the empty space. In strong contrast to their surroundings they were all gayly dressed. Reds and yellows predominated, nor was there wanting the glitter of gold nor flash of gem. In such raiment, with slim figures and swarthy Eastern faces, none could mistake them for anything but the Rommany.

"Jativo is judged," they cried, laughing one and all; "five hundred horseshoes must he make for Jara."

"Oh, brave Pantulengro," said Goliath, jeeringly; "see you, rye, what he receives for his folly?"

"A light enough punishment for such a scoundrel. Is that not Jara?"

"Aye, and Pepa!"

It was indeed the old woman who hobbled across the oval. With coifed head, scarlet cloak, and long staff, she looked like some witch homeward bound from the Brocken. After her stamped Pepa, seemingly in a furious rage. At the pitch of her voice she scolded Jara, who at first took no notice, but at last, leaning chin on staff, turned to face the little fury. Her eyes flamed wrathfully, but she spoke quietly enough in Rommany.

"Witch child," said she, "beware lest I drive you from Egypt. Your rom sinned, he is punished. Sin you not, else may drao spice your food."

"For drao I care as little as for you, mother of cats," retorted the undaunted Pepa. "Soon will you go thither," pointing towards the water-fall, "and I shall be Queen of the Cales."

"First learn the city's name, child," answered Jara, with a sour smile. "Not to such as thee will it be revealed by Jara."

"I will tear it from thy heart, evil one; and when thou diest, my rom shall scatter thy bones. I will dance and sing, mother of all the fiends, as they dust the air."

And she sang:

"Thy bones shall he disperse,
While I call down with song
On thy dead soul a curse."

"Ha! ha! ha! a viper is waiting for thy soul, mother! Ha! ha!"

With a scream of elvick laughter she vanished into the crowd. Jara resumed her progress towards Challice, muttering angrily in Rommany:

"A curse on these daughters! They lie with free tongues. The name of this is not for thee, my Pepa! Queen of the Cales! Nay, nay! The wife of my son's grandson shall rule. Hey, child!" added she

in Spanish, pausing before Challice. "The rose comes to those cheeks again. I have punished the evil one."

"And cured me, mother."

"Cured thee for the dreeing of thy weird." Then turning towards the crowd, "Children of my soul, this is the son of my son's son."

And all the people shouted, "Ah, how we love you, brother."

CHAPTER V

THE RED WITCH

Gladly enough did Challice leave Jara and her craven images to dwell with Goliath; although, domestically speaking, the change was for the worse—at least, there were no idols, and fewer draughts. To sight and feeling the relief was great. Challice also, indirectly, benefited in another way, as his luggage was brought on from Palma by the thoughtful gypsy. Not yet sufficiently decivilized to dispense with cleanliness, he was thankful for a change of linen and clothing. Beyond this sybaritism, he lived as did his host, sleeping, wrapped in a blanket, on the bare ground, faring on fruit, water, and black bread. Sometimes Goliath would bring a kid and a skin of wine from Soller, with which luxuries they indulged their appetites. Such dainties finished, they returned philosophically to bread and water. It was a true savage life, plenty to-day, little to-morrow, and either fortune bred contentment.

After that genealogical revelation Jara held her peace. Despite the near neighborhood of her descendant, and frequent meetings with him in the val-

ley, she yet gave no hint of further confidences. He, schooling himself to patience, awaited the speaking of this withered oracle, and meantime amused himself by mingling in the novel life around. Introduced to the cave-dwellers by Goliath he was received as a brother, and rapidly made friends. Unfortunately, as few stayed longer than a week, such friendships were apt to terminate abruptly.

The nomadic instinct of the gypsy was well exemplified by the flux of this population. It changed every week with the utmost regularity, and ever a succession of new faces replaced the old. None of these pilgrims appeared to relish the melancholy gorge, and evidently regarded their seven days' stay in the light of a duty. Incoming was a pain, outgoing a pleasure; therefore Challice guessed that they cared but little for the obligation. Such compulsion puzzled him not a little, and he ultimately referred his doubts to Goliath.

"They come, they go," said he, "and Jara alone remains constantly in the gorge. What is the meaning of these pilgrimages?"

"Truly, brother, it is more custom than aught else. When our fathers came from the East they founded this city of refuge, and hither came the Rommany when persecuted by Gentile kings. That was in the black ages, brother. Since Carlos Tercero

(hail to his memory!) we have had freedom, yet our brethren seek the city as of yore. They love it not, this place of tombs, but, as their fathers did, so do they."

"I should think the city would be forgotten by this time."

"Nay, brother Where a Caló is, there is the city known And forget not, brother, that Jara is the ruler of our people. Many who seek justice come to the Mother, and her word is binding on all from high to low Therefore, brother, some have business in Egypt, and those who have not come hither from love of old customs."

"Do all gypsies come?"

"Once in a lifetime at least. 'Who sees not Egypt is no Egyptian.' That is a proverb of the Rommany, brother."

"Is there any religious feeling connected with—"

"Brother," interrupted Goliath, with disdain, "we have no religion. Yet it is true," continued he, thoughtfully, "that many believe the soul hides in beast and fowl and creeping things."

"Ah! metempsychosis!"

"I known not that word, rye."

"The transmigration of souls."

"Aye, brother. Mostly our women believe in such things. Did you not hear Pepa promise a viper's body for the sheath of Jara's soul? Job! It

is all lies. I die, you die, and thus we end. The dead are dead, brother, and who can rouse them by crying, 'Arise?'"

A few days later Challice found a red ribbon in the cave. From its peculiar tint he guessed it to be an adornment of Pepa's. How it got there he could not conjecture, as she had not been seen since the punishment of her rom. He, prisoned in a cavern higher up the gorge, worked at his forge, and, as Goliath surmised, Pepa, like a dutiful romi, bore him company. Challice regretted this seclusion, apparently the outcome of connubial affection. He was anxious to see again one who piqued him by her insolence, and perplexed him by unexplained hatreds. Judging from what had happened, she was not the woman to thus acquiesce in the present order of things. She had plainly an object in view; and purposing to bring about her own ends, began action by the frivolity of a dropped ribbon. Goliath, when questioned, volunteered a similar explanation.

"I picked up this red ribbon in our cave," said Challice, dangling it before the eyes of Goliath.

"Pepa!" observed the gypsy, and smiled.

"Why do you smile, Goliath?"

"Job! a ribbon of that color is a love-token with us. Pepa hated you once, she loves you now."

"You are not serious?"

"Am I not! Bind that ribbon on your left arm and see."

"Why on the left arm?"

"She who left it asks for love. He who wears it thus accepts that love."

Suspicious of such untoward kindness, Challice gave voice to his distrust. "It is another scheme to snare me," said he.

"I doubt it," replied Goliath. "Pepa dare not harm you here. Did she slay you the Mother would mix drao for her."

"Drao!"

"Poison, brother. Pepa knows what drao is. She might try it on you; for if she fails to end you openly, she may try secret measures. Therefore, brother, eat nothing she offers you, take nothing from her; she has the cunning of a fox."

"What would Jativo say to this love-token?"

"Pharaoh is safe at his forge, as Pepa well knows. Come thither with me, rye, and we will show the witchwife's favor."

"Thank you, Goliath, but I don't want a hammer at my head."

"There is more fear for Pepa than for you, my brother. He would kill her if he knew she dropped that ribbon here."

"It might be an accident," suggested Challice.

Goliath thrust his tongue into his cheek. "Acci-

dent!" said he, "Pepa is too fly for that. Tie it on your left arm, rye, and see what will happen." After which advice he departed, chuckling.

Without hesitation Challice obeyed. Anxious to know more of Pepa's nature and scheming, he deemed it good policy to make the second advance. She, with the ribbon, had hinted the first; therefore, binding the love-token on his left arm, he went out to seek his fair enemy. As by magic she appeared round the shoulder of the pyramid. With a black mantilla she had modified the glare of her crimsons, and shedding perfume from a bunch of roses in her bodice, advanced boldly. One hand carried a spread fan, the other rested jauntily on her hip, and a cigarette between her lips gave the finishing touch to her picturesque insolence.

"Sarishan Rye!" said she.

"I don't understand Rommany," answered Challice, a trifle coldly. It is difficult to converse amiably with an ill-wisher.

"Ché cuckoo, with the single note, you have many things to learn."

"Not as regards this."

He glanced at the ribbon fluttering at his elbow, and she, following his eye, laughed derisively, with a wilful pretence of grievance.

"You have the bar lachi, brother. The women love you."

"Bar lachi!"

"Loadstone, rye! Bar lachi is loadstone. He who carries it draws all hearts. Come, señor, who is she the spell has drawn?"

"A red cardinal with a black priest's robe."

Seizing at once the allusion to her dress, Pepa dropped her fan to clap her hands.

"That is a true Rommany answer," she said; "not the truth, and yet the truth. I was all cardinal at Palma when I penned dukkerin."

"Aye! And did your best to have the prophecy fulfilled."

Pepa filliped away the stump of her cigarette and shrugged her shoulders.

"Said I not you had bar lachi, brother? It saved you from steel and lead, and it has drawn my heart towards thee."

"I am not desirous of Jativo's property."

With an angry gesture Pepa stamped her foot.

"Then return my token; I will be Mary Padilla to no unwilling wooer."

"Mary Padilla!"

"Aye! She was Queen of the Cales, and the romi of Don Pedro."

"I remember now. The favorite of Pedro the Cruel! A nice comparison, truly. Well—and she was Queen of the Gypsies, as you desire to be."

"As I shall be, Englishman," corrected Pepa,

spreading her fan; "but what do you know of Egyptian affairs?" she continued, disdainfully. "You who are but half-kin to the Cales."

"Quite enough kin to secure your hatred!" retorted Challice.

"What bee has stung you? I hate a handsome stranger. By my faith, I am no despiser of good things. There is love here," added she, significantly touching her breast, "and it is for you."

"What about Jativo?"

Pepa dismissed Jativo's name with a snap of her fingers.

"That much is so much, señor. What of Jativo! I know not, nor does he. It might be that he dies! Unlucky one! I turned the cards thrice for his future, and thrice did the death-card face me. It is written."

The sombre tone of her voice, the shadow on her face augured ill for Jativo. Quick to read such signs, Challice put his thoughts into words.

"Do you wish him dead?"

"Why should I? He is my rom. Should he die I would tear my hair, and weep tears of blood after the fashion of our people. Then," added she, looking languorously at Challice, "it may be I shall take another rom."

"Here is your ribbon, Pepa! I care for no romi who prophesies so truly."

"Nay, señor," she replied, having sufficient wit to note the spent arrow. "Keep you the ribbon—blame me not for my love! What can I do against one who carries a piece of bar lachi?"

"I do not carry bar lachi."

"Then how strong must be the glances of your eyes. They are true bar lachi for such as I. My faith I could light this cigarette at ther blaze. What says the song, camarada:

> "'*The glance of a gypsy eye*
> *Burnt up my heart within me,*
> *Without heart, without love I die;*'

"therefore, Englishman, be sparing of your glances. Blessed John, the fire is out of your eye. Give me flint and steel, pretty lad."

Much amused at her impish ways, Challice struck a match. Their fingers touched, and a thrill ran through his body. Despite his devotion to Mrs. Ingraham, it was difficult to act the St. Anthony to one so bent on taking by storm his heart. The blood of Challice, heated by southern suns, sang in his veins. With a great effort, under the fire of her glances, he withdrew his fingers abruptly. She noting such a confession of timidity, lighted her cigarette with a mocking smile—a smile that hinted at conquest. It was altogether too shameless a wooing.

Hardly pressed, Challice began to retreat. She followed laughing.

"Fly not, my enemy! Is your head weaker than your heart?"

"By no means," said he, flushing an angry red, "'tis stronger. Therefore I depart from so dangerous a neighborhood."

"A pretty compliment prettily paid. Will you not smoke with me, my gracious hidalgo?" she added, offering a handful of cigarettes.

Challice, mindful of Goliath's warning, politely declined.

"Ah, bah!" said Pepa, throwing the cigarettes away. "You are no man, but a priest—a priest," she repeated, with a petulant stamp. "Is there no way of heating the water in your veins?"

"I think not. And, after all, why try so uncongenial a task. You are Pharaoh's, and I—another's."

"You have a romi?" she questioned, in an altered voice.

"Not yet, but I soon shall have."

"Oh!" said the brunette, mockingly, "some yellow-haired rani."

"Indeed, she is as fair as you, Pepa."

For the startling effect of this remark he was not prepared. With pantherine grace she leaped forward and griped his wrist. Her face was not a pleasant sight at the moment.

"Is she a Rommany?"

"I don't think so," replied Challice, really expressing his doubts.

Pepa dropped his wrist with a sigh of relief. "Good," she muttered, "if not gypsy, I care not who or what she is. Without true blood he can do nothing."

"What do you mean?"

"Give me your hand, Englishman," she said imperiously; "the left! the left!"

"No more prophecies of death, Pepa."

She paid no attention to the remark, but followed the lines of his hand with slow finger.

"Surprise and danger and marriage," said the sibly, hurriedly. "This for loss of wealth—that for happy mating, Dios!" in shrill triumph, "the line of failure—of failure, my gray one;" finished she, sticking the cigarette in her mouth, and nodding her head.

"What are you talking about—to what—?"

"Never you mind, hombrecillo. Be content with love and happy marriage. Your failure is my success. It is a true bahi," and with that, clapping her hands, she blew a cloud of smoke.

"You are a Sphinx," said Challice, perplexed by these emotions. "I thought there was but one."

"And that, no doubt, a woman. Eh, my brave señor, all women are Sphinxes, know you not that?

Ignorant one, who but a woman can read my riddle? Ask Jara!"

She swung off with a jeering laugh, which brought the blood to his cheek. Trust a woman by word and glance to bring such heart-tides to high water.

"Well! well!" cried he after her, "I shall ask Jara! One last word," added the conquering, using the only weapon in his armory, "this ribbon!"

"My ribbon!" said she, returning with a bound, "you fear my spells, I see."

"No Pepa! I fear neither you nor your spells."

Pepa flung her fan in the air and caught it deftly, whistling shrilly the while—evidently some scheme was being brought to fulfilment.

"I am about to try my witchcraft on you," said she, mockingly. "Nay! do not stir, I but wish to dance for your pleasure; here is my music," she added, as a morsel of humanity appeared on the scene. "Zargo shall play and I dance. Come, my chilly Englishman, do you not love the castanettes?"

With a consenting smile Challice leaned back against the slant of the pyramid, and produced a cigarette.

"Dance on, daughter of Herodias! I am no John the Baptist to lose my head to your nimbleness."

Disdainfully smiling, she signed to Zargo to begin. At the first note of the dwarf's guitar, as developed out of thin air, an audience filled the vacant space.

Pepa's dancing was famous, but it was rarely she obliged her own people with an exhibition. That she should so far favor Challice, showed her wish to bring him to her feet without loss of time. The dwarfish musician thrummed industriously at his instrument, and Pepa flung her fan to Challice.

"Hold it well, Englishman. The bolero, Zargo! Olá."

With a brisk rattle of the castanettes, she bounded into the circle of onlookers. Foot pointed, body thrown back, arms gracefully aloft, she began the dance with slow swayings. The staccato notes of the guitar echoed richly to the ear, broken rhythmically by the castanettes' sharp click. From side to side leaped the dancer, her light feet scarce imprinting the sandy soil. With every whirl of her skirts the sequins jingled musically, and a shower of petals fell from the shaken roses on her breast. As the music moved faster, more frantic grew the dancer, bounding high in the air, sinking with ballooning draperies to the ground. Round and round the applauding circle she span incessantly. When near Challice she flung him a rose, again the red ribbon, and at length, exhausted by the fury of music and dance, stopped short in graceful poise, as though turned on the second to stone. Loud applause followed, in the midst of which hand-clapping, Pepa sprang towards Challice.

"My fan, my rose, my ribbon," said she, breathlessly.

"Take the fan," he replied, looking steadily at the rich darkness of her face, "but rose and ribbon I shall keep."

Fanning herself in slow sweeps, she moved silently away, hand on hip, with backward looks and victorious smiles. So glancing, so smiling, she disappeared in the crowd, leaving Challice, with rose and ribbon, spell-bound by her evil grace.

CHAPTER VI

THE PYRAMID

After the brief Carnival of Pleasure came (as was inevitable) the Lent of Repentance, and the better part of Challice took the worser to task for that untoward revolt. Commoved to self-reproach, he scarce could pardon his own delinquency. Yet in time (so tolerant are our judgments) this mood melted to one more gracious. On mature reflection he became conscious of an excuse or so, that justified in some measure his unsteady virtue. Hot youth—this was the argument—hot youth by yielding beauty, is as fire by gunpowder. The resultant ignition, by flame or eye, is but the consistent evolution of natural laws. To take shame to himself for such were to disparage the economy of this excellent universe.

And, after all, he had but sinned with his eyes. A mere imprudence, having regard to the provocation received. Pepa was well worth the admiration she had won, and such artistic approval as he had given her in nowise resembled his devotion to the one incomparable woman. One can adore a star, yet trifle with a rose. In this instance the application of the

apothegm is obvious. The distinction truly is somewhat fine, nevertheless it is a distinction, and one satisfactory to the not over-exacting mind of Challice.

By such comparisons did he measure his sin, till it dwindled to a mere indiscretion. Restored to self-esteem he made speed to remount the pedestal of egotism, and thus regained serenity of mind and body. So largely does an artistic temperament hamper morality in the clean run of its duty.

"Nevertheless," said he to Goliath, while so cracking moral nuts, "I must leave this place at once."

"And wherefore, brother?" questioned the gypsy, ignorant of the mental conflict preceding this determination.

"In a word—I mistrust Pepa."

Goliath grinned. He was human himself, and appreciated the dangers of temptation.

"You fear her smiles more than her frowns, rye," he observed.

"Man is but a weak creature," said Challice, sententiously, "and Pepa, versed in the arts of seduction, would conquer St. Anthony himself. She only makes love to gain her own ends, and knowing this I should be proof against her fascinations. I wish to keep my head," he added, doubtfully, "and so would place a mile or so between us."

Goliath coincided, and gave his reasons.

"Pepa is a witch," he remarked, with much truth.

"She knows her rom would kill her and you if he suspected there was anything wrong. To her own wit she trusts for safety, but is quite ready to sacrifice you."

"For what reason?"

"There you have me, brother. I don't know what schemes she has in her head; but sure am I that they mean good to herself, and evil to you."

"In that case the wisest plan would be to leave."

"As you please, brother. You are no prisoner, and I am at your service to guide you back to Palma. Still, before leaving it would be wise for you to see Jara, and that reminds me," added Goliath, smiting his forehead with open palm, "that reminds me that I forgot to give you her message."

"A message from Jara?"

"Aye, brother. She bids you be in the shadow of the pyramid at nine to-night."

"For what reason?"

"I know not, rye. It may have to do with your journey here, or with the treasures of Egypt stored in yonder pyramid, or it may be," finished Goliath, significantly, "that she would speak of your marriage."

"You mean that Mrs. Ingraham—"

"No," interrupted the gypsy, decisively; "I mean nothing. What Jara knows she tells to-night. I think much, but speak little. Still, brother, I am

sure that all will be well with you and yours. Go to the pyramid, my brother, and see what fate has in store for you."

This invitation, pregnant with mystery, put all thought of Pepa and her wiles out of the Englishman's head. Convinced that Jara had not yet revealed her real reason for inveigling him hither, he hailed with joy an opportunity which promised to bring the matter to an issue. He was quite resolved that this meeting should end in more than empty words. The hatred of Pepa, the indirect allusions to Mrs. Ingraham, the profundities of Jara, such hintings greatly roused his curiosity. For his own satisfaction he wished these recondite matters explained, and on the quality of the explanation would depend the duration of his stay in the valley.

Long before the appointed hour he wandered round the pyramid, in the vain hope that Jara, sharing his impatience, might present herself early. She did not put in an appearance, however, and the gypsies being safely bestowed in their caves, no human being, save himself, enlivened the spectral solitude. Long afterwards did Challice remember that eyrie vigil so fraught with hopes and fears of an uncertain future.

The moon was up, but not yet over the surrounding peaks, so that the gorge was yet filled with darkness. Overhead the hollow sky emitted a wan light,

which glinted on pyramid and water-fall. This latter, sweeping downward with hoarse roaring, plunged smoothly into abysmal depths. From where the main avenue terminated, Challice noted the adumbration of the pyramid against the falling veil of foam. A searching wind swept from the arid heights. The sobbing breeze, the muffled water-fall, glimmering sky and monstrosity of rock and pyramid, all these conjunctively struck a chill into his heart. Oh! for the blaze of a fire, for the sound of a voice, the echo of a foot-fall to tenant the loneliness with other than shadows, but nothing of earth disturbed the savagery of the scene, and it remained lamentable, desolate, unhuman.

"Is it thee, my son?" croaked Jara, emerging a shadow from the shadow. Challice faced round with an involuntary cry. His nerves, shaken by night and solitude, were scarcely under control. The apparition of this red-cloaked hag, weary with eld, compelled the momentary weakness. The next moment, with swift recovery, he was saluting her eagerly. For him she was the messenger of Fate, perchance, the goddess herself.

"I came hither as you wished, mother," said he.

"Aye, child. I have many things to say on affairs of Egypt."

"I should like to know a little about my own affairs also," retorted Challice, dryly. "For instance,

the reason of Pepa's hatred of me, and why you brought me hither."

"All shall be told thee, child," said Jara, patting his hand; "not for folly did I send the jade eye. No, no! Of Pepa you shall be told many things. Touching affairs of Egypt, you must listen. Son of my son's son you are, and all our secrets I shall reveal. Come hither, child, and view the treasure of the Rommany."

Without waiting for an answer she hobbled painfully into the shadow of the pyramid, passed through it, beyond it, and paused on the opposite side. Here the moon, brimming the hollow with light, sparkled on the sloping triangle of black basalt. Their figures, grotesque and misshapen, were thrown strongly on this luminous foreground. Jara pointed with her staff to strange runes deeply graven on the stone.

"A spell, my son," said she; "the words of our fathers graven in the signs they brought thither from the East."

"They look like Sanskrit," remarked Challice, recognizing the characters.

"Aye! It was the tongue of our fathers when they dwelt in walled cities. But that was long since. Now the Rommany wander in many lands. Of these things, child, we can talk further—meantime, the treasure. See, son of my son's son, I press

hard with my staff on this sign—the stone swings, and the dark way is revealed."

With a vigor of which Challice could scarcely have believed her frail arm capable, she forced the staff's point into the convolutions of a letter. As she said, the stone yielded, and swinging smoothly round on a central pivot, revealed a flight of steps inclining downward to deepest gloom.

"This torch," said Jara, producing one from under her cloak, "will lighten our steps."

Amid the smoke and ruddy glare she stepped into the darkness, followed by Challice. Descending the staircase for some little distance they turned to the left, and almost immediately entered what was apparently a large hall. At the entrance two branching candelabra of bronze bore many lamps, and to these the old woman pointed.

"Light them and wait," said she, briefly, and disappeared into the farther gloom. Without remark Challice obeyed her instructions and summed up the scene, revealed by such illumination, in two words.

"Aladdin's cave," said he, and the term was apt.

No decorative art had been employed in the construction of this subterranean vault. It was simply a large hole quarried out of the rocky ground, and roofed by the quadrilateral slantings of the pyramid. At the apex a round hole admitted air and the steady spark of the pole star. Lamps and torch

served rather to show than to dispel the darkness, so that from his position Challice could not see the end of the vault. Nevertheless, within his immediate neighborhood he noted the rough walls were honeycombed with niches, and in these rested the treasures of Egypt.

Cross and pyx, silver images and eucharistic vessels. On these the Rommany had laid sacrilegious hands, and here, mere useless lumber, they tarnished through the ages. Jewels glittered in golden circlets, flashed in the pommels of swords, or, torn from their settings, lay here and there in glittering heaps. In one recess were stored flagons, dishes, and battered goblets of gold. Chains of strange device, scabbards incrusted with gems, salvers, rings, bracelets, jewelled belts, and gilded armors. Treasures of east and west were here collected, at Heaven only knows what cost of rapine and murder. Adornments of generations, cherished possessions of wealthy families, sacred utensils of altar and shrine, were all shut up in the womb of the valley, useless to the world as to the gypsies who thieved them. Attracted like magpies by the glitter, they had stolen and hidden these splendors for the mere pleasure of possession. Challice wondered what delight they could take in such, to them, useless gauds.

"The treasures of Egypt—the treasures of Egypt,"

piped the old woman, suddenly appearing at his elbow.

"Do you make use of them?"

"No, child. What care the Rommany for such things? Collected from all lands, in all ages, they lie here despised and forgotten. Aye, aye!" she added, darting her quick glance at the discolored ornaments, "many crimes have been committed for the sake of these. Our brethren stole them from blazing house and ruined city. Out of the earth they came; in the earth they are, and the dust lies over all."

"A sermon on the vanity of wealth," moralized Challice, ironically. "But if you despise and have no use for them, why keep them here?"

"Who knows but what we may one day require them, child. Truly the persecutions of the black ages are gone, but it may be that in time the Rommany fall again under the ban. By the gift of these to king and prince we may gain protection for our race. To this end do I hold these treasures here, else long since would they have been dispersed. No one sees them but Jara, and she cares naught for such vanities."

"If the gypsies anticipate persecution, I wonder they do not band together for protection. Unity, they say, is strength."

"It may not be, child. A wandering race we are,

and what is in the blood must out. Would the stag forsake the wilds for fenced pastures? or the wolf submit to the chain of the house-dog? As the Cales were created so they must be. Said the high lord to the gorgio, 'Sit at your gates and be at rest;' but to the Rommany did he say, 'Roam,' and therefore do we wander."

"If that is gypsy philosophy, this city is out of keeping."

"Nay, child; there is a centre to all things. Truly, the Rommany dwell not in walled towns and call no man lord. But this city was founded of old by our fathers as a refuge from persecution, and here dwell I, Queen of the Cales, keeping watch over the destinies of my wandering children. It is not a home, child, for none dwell here; but it is the centre of gypsydom—the nameless city, whose name none may know save the Queen of the Cales."

"It is always a woman who rules here?"

"Always a woman," repeated Jara, nodding her head. "No man lords it over the Rommany. The wit of woman sways Rommany destinies. Sit ye down, child, and hearken to the story of our race."

On a fragment of rock Challice took his seat, and bent curious eyes on the sibyl. She, frail with age yet strong in spirit, still remained standing, and spoke slowly, with her chin resting on her tall staff.

In that dreary vault, under the faint radiance of lamps, amid the wreckage of past ages, he gave ear to her speech. Truly the most fanciful of his dreams had never included such fantasy as this.

"Our fathers came from the far East," said she; "aye, from Hindostan, the cradle of all things. Thither they fled from Tamerlane, Lord of Samarcand (may his soul find no rest!), who would have blotted out our race. But in those days arose a woman who spoke bravely to the persecuted. 'Let us go hence,' said she; 'go hence, to wander by Western seas. Holding no city, possessing no treasure, ruling no land, none will care to harm us. We will but ask to live as the bears, the sky our house-roof, the earth our heritage, and the sons of our sons' sons shall follow the ways of their fathers.' So she spoke, and so it was done. From Hindostan went forth our hordes, and she, the wise one, was leader of the host. To Europe they came, and, alas! of sorcery and theft and hokano laro were they accused. It was another woman, my pretty one, who founded this city of refuge. 'When the King's hand lies heavy on the Rommany,' said she, 'let them fly hither.' And truly they came hither in the black ages. For many hundreds of years have our people homed to this solitude, and we look on it as the refuge of our race. Now the Rommany are under no ban, and go whither they choose. Rarely do they come

here save once in a lifetime, but the city remains, and the queen."

"Always a queen?"

"Aye, my son. As the wit of woman twice saved the Rommany from extinction, so have they elected to be governed by the sex. Moreover, in a greater measure than the male is the female skilled in foretelling the future; therefore do the Cales rely on the ruling of queens."

"But, surely, you do not believe in such superstitions?"

"Why not, child? I have seen strange things in the stars, and there is a life beyond which rules our lives on earth."

"Do you, then, believe in the immortality of the soul?"

"The rose grows in many gardens, but it is always a rose," said she. "A soul each being possesses—it cast off the flesh of a previous existence, and housed itself in the flesh of earth. In the future it will again strip such skin and clothe itself in another. The body dies, but not the soul."

"That is the Hindoo doctrine of transmigration."

"Aye, child, our fathers came from Hindostan."

"Goliath believes in annihilation."

"It is true, and so do many of our race. They are foolish; but I am wise, son, and have ruled the

Cales nigh a hundred years. I know many things of which my children are ignorant."

"Do you know who will succeed you as queen?" asked Challice, anxious to test her prophetic powers.

"It is of that I wish to speak," said the old woman. "Pepa (may the evil Moors seize her!) would be queen. But she is not of my blood, and of my blood would I have the rulers of the Cales."

"But you have no daughter?"

"No, child. You are the sole one of my blood, and it is your romi I would make Mother of the Rommany—she queen, you Pharaoh—and through your children shall one of my blood yet rule the Cales."

"But I have no wife," objected Challice.

"Is it not in your mind to marry, child?"

"Yes; but I don't know if I can marry the woman I love till next June. And that reminds me," said he, breaking off, "that your letter spoke of some information to be revealed relative to my meeting with Mrs. Ingraham in June."

"Aye, son, I wish your romi to rule the Cales, and to tell you this I brought you hither. You are the son of my son's son, and only to your romi will I reveal the name of the city."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Child," said Jara, solemnly, "when this city of refuge was founded by the wise mother she gave it

a name which was known but to herself. When she died, to her successor did she reveal it, and in time the name was told to me, who am now queen. The name must not be spoke, else would the city be destroyed."

"I have heard of a similar superstition in regard to Rome. No one, to this day, knows the true name of Rome."

"Aye! Nor will any one, save your romi, know the name of our city. She who knows the name," added Jara, with energy, "becomes Queen of the Cales. Bring hither your romi, child, and by telling her the name shall I make her queen when I am dead and gone."

"Ah!" cried Challice, a train of thought suggesting itself by this last remark, "now I see why Pepa wishes to marry me."

"She wants to become your romi and queen. It is known that to your wife only shall I reveal the name, and so Pepa schemes for your love."

"But Jativo?"

"Child, is there not poison and steel and lead? Jativo shall die by her desire so that she becomes your romi and queen."

"I wouldn't marry her if there wasn't another woman in the world," said Challice, with considerable energy. "Why, she tried to have me murdered —not once, but twice."

"It is so," assented Jara. "Knowing I sent for you, she wished to slay you, so as to frustrate my plans. At the inn, on the road, she tried and failed. Now she thinks it better to gain her ends by becoming your wife. Beware of her charms, child."

Challice laughed consciously. Too well he recognized how nearly he had fallen a victim to the arts of Pepa. Like the sirens of classic fable, she charmed but to destroy.

"Pepa's fascinations will have no effect on me," he said, a trifle boastfully. "I have a safeguard against them in the love I bear Mrs. Ingraham. But," added he, foreseeing an obstacle, "if I marry one who is not a Rommany, how then?"

"You will not marry a Gentile."

"If Mrs. Ingraham is a Gentile I shall certainly marry her," retorted Challice, with some heat.

"No, my son. If the rani is not a gypsy you will not wed her."

It seemed to Challice as though Jara was but playing with words, for she evidently knew more than she chose to confess.

"Do you know anything of Mrs. Ingraham?" said he.

"Much," she answered, calmly; "but there is one who knows more."

"And that one?"

A voice from the darkness answered his question:

"Is I!"

Challice looked up, and saw a smile on the face of Mrs. Ingraham.

CHAPTER VII

ISAIA

"You see there is nothing certain but the unforeseen," said Mrs. Ingraham, advancing to greet him with out-stretched hands. He was too astonished to take the initiative.

"Unforeseen certainly," assented Challice, "but scarcely unexpected. Oh, yes," he added, noticing an amused smile on her face, "I rather suspected that you had something to do with these mysteries. The information contained in Jara's letter anent our meeting could only have come from you. Moreover, you spoke to Goliath in Rommany, and I recognized the beggar in the guide when I arrived at Palma. These things," concluded the young man, "are not due to chance."

"You reason well, Mr. Challice."

"Mr. Challice?"

"If it please you I will say Lancelot, but," she continued, lifting a finger playfully, "it does not commit me to anything."

"Not to marriage?"

Mrs. Ingraham glanced at the immovable Jara, and shook her head.

"I am not to answer that question till June," she said, evasively.

"But, Mrs. Ingraham—"

"As we are brother and sister, Lancelot, you may call me Isaia."

"Brother and sister!" repeated Challice, falling back a step, the better to read her face. This declaration of relationship rather shook his nerve.

"Aye, child," said Jara, answering for the younger woman; "she is of Rommany blood. Said I not you would wed with your own kin?"

"This is the most wonderful thing of all," marvelled Challice, divining further mysteries. "You are a Rommany lady!"

"Yes, brother," said she, mischievously; "a gypsy wench, born in a tent, cradled in a caravan, and now dwelling as a Gentile among Gentiles."

The astonished Challice looked at her in silence, and recognized in a hundred subtle ways the truth of this assertion. From gypsy blood came that Oriental coloring which had heretofore led him to call her Cleopatra. Oval face, bluish-black hair, and olive complexion, such features might pass her off as an Italian, but the eyes were distinctly Rommany. Large, dark, and languishing, they had yet that film over them which betrayed her kinship with the Cales. Also there were other noticeable points. The imperial carriage, the free, swinging gait, and

the untameable haughtiness of bearing, one and all marked characteristics of a scarce civilized race. Now he knew the truth it was a matter of wonderment to him that he had not guessed it before.

"Yes," said he, concluding a rapid examination; "you are a gypsy."

"And yet," observed Mrs. Ingraham, glancing down at her gray travelling dress, "I am not garbed as one."

"I go by the face. Pepa's skirts of red and Pepa's golden sequins could not make you more of a Gitána."

"Pepa! My rival!"

"There you are mistaken," said her lover, reddening for a moment. "I admired Pepa's beauty, but my heart has always been true to you."

Mrs. Ingraham, with indulgent smiles, took him by the hand.

"Do not defend yourself," said she, looking into his eyes. "I heard your conversation with Jara. And now," she added, in a more lively tone, "as these mysteries are ended, let us leave this vault."

"Not yet. I wish to hear your story. With yourself as heroine, it is certain to be most interesting."

"But Jara!"

"Oh, Jara is well enough," said Challice, forgetting manners in his eagerness to hear her speak.

Jara looked up with an ironical smile on her withered face. "Aye, aye!" said she, "the old must ever give place to the young. Jara was everything yesterday—she is nothing to-day."

"Pardon me, mother," said Challice, touching her shoulder, penitently; "it is selfish of me to speak so."

"Nay, child. I blame you not that you are human. Youth to youth, and age to age; speak with Isaia if you so choose. I can wait your pleasure."

After this not unkindly speech the old woman relapsed into silence. Challice turned with manifest relief from her gnarled uncomeliness to contemplate the charms of his beloved. It was, as he said, "selfish," but then he was in love, and in the presence of the one incomparable woman, so all lesser considerations merged in the greater. Mrs. Ingraham looked at him smilingly from her seat on the rock he had vacated. Intoxicated by her fresh beauty, he threw himself on his knees, and covered her hands with kisses. Startled, not unpleasantly, by the ardor of his passion, she strove to draw them away.

"No!" said she, warning him for the second time; "my meeting you here does not commit me to any definite promise."

"But you will marry me?"

"It is not yet the second Sunday in June, nor is this Hyde Park."

The speech chilled him, and with a gesture of annoyance he relinquished her hands.

"You are bent on breaking my heart," he declared, ill-temperedly.

True woman as she was, this gust of anger pleased her more than the caress. Having aroused his wrath she proceeded to quieten it with sweet speeches.

"You are a most exacting lover," she said, looking at him chin on hand. "I take a long journey to these wilds for your benefit, I meet you here with no chaperon save old Jara, and yet you talk of breaking your heart. What further concessions can I make to prove that I love you?"

"Marry me."

"Now you are in extremes. Between this and that are intermediate stages. You would not have me fall like a ripe fruit at the first touch. Besides," she added, ironically, "it is not the custom of women to concede all in a moment."

"But how long is this state of uncertainty to last?"

"I have already told you more times than I care to count," replied Mrs. Ingraham, impatiently, "that you must wait till the second Sunday in June. On that day I shall be able to say whether I will marry

you or not. No more protestations," she added, with a slight frown. "Let me tell you my story, and you shall see that I have reasons for what I have no doubt you call my caprice."

"I won't say another word," said Challice, obediently. "No doubt your story will tell me all I wish to know."

"I am afraid not. However, you can take what information you choose out of it, and possess your soul in patience till the expiration of your probation."

Mindful of his promise Challice uttered no word, but looked at her with eloquent eyes. With feminine inconsistency, such obedience rather displeased than contented her, and she waited to hear him speak. Guessing her intent he held his peace, and with pretended vexation she was forced to begin her story. Before it ended she triumphed over his reticence, for twice, thrice, and it may be more times, he interrupted the narrative with questions and comments.

"If London society," she began, folding her hands —"if London society knew the genealogy of the rich Mrs. Ingraham, I regret to say it would be greatly shocked. Fortunately, I have baffled the numerous inquiries as to my pedigree, and now society is content to receive me as the widow of the millionaire, Samuel Ingraham. What a commotion it would

cause if society knew I am a pure-blooded gypsy, with Isaia Stanley for a name, a fortune-teller for a mother, and a tinker for a father."

"A tinker!"

"Ah, I see you are shocked already," she observed, severely. "There is more gorgio than Rommany about you."

"But you don't look in the least like a tinker's daughter," he protested.

"Education, my friend, nothing more. You will wonder less when you hear all. My father was a tinker and a bruiser."

"A prize-fighter!"

"Yes; in the days when the ring was more thought of than now. He tinkered for a livelihood, and fought for a pastime. I was born in a tent on a Berkshire common, and I have no doubt my mother stole my swaddling-clothes."

"Oh no! Do not tell me these horrible details. You are exaggerating."

"Indeed, I am not. My parents, of the ordinary gypsy class, were not troubled with too much honesty. Pray do not look so horrified, Lancelot; I assure you the taint is not in my blood. I am a Rommany, but not a thief, though, to be sure, your horror is a mere Gentile prejudice."

"Do you uphold thieving?"

"No! I don't go so far as that, but you know

cheating the Busnée is a predilection of the gypsies. It is really not much worse than swindling on the Stock Exchange. In fact, I think it is more respectable."

The declaration of such doubtful ethics, though productive of laughter, produced no answer from Challice, nor did Mrs. Ingraham wait for one, but almost without pausing resumed her speech.

"I need not tell you of my early life, and, in fact, remember very little about it. At the age of three years my father matched himself in the ring against Ben of Windsor. They fought without the gloves, and poor Silvanus Stanley received such a thrashing that he died of his injuries within the week. My mother supported herself after his death by fortune-telling, and perished one winter while trying to cross a common in a snow-storm."

"And you?" asked Challice, breathlessly.

"I was with her," replied Mrs. Ingraham, quickly. "She wrapped me up in her rags, poor soul, and herself died of the exposure. Almost frozen myself, I was found next day by no less a person than Mr. Ingraham. He, as you know, was a great philanthropist, and finding me a starving gypsy waif on that common, charged himself with my future life."

"A good man!"

"A very good man," said she, emphatically. "Few men are so honest and good as he was. There is noth-

ing but gratitude in my heart towards him. I declare," she continued, with great fervor, "that I owe it to his memory to continue my widowhood."

"Is that the obstacle?" demanded Challice, sharply.

"No, sir, it is not. Far from wishing me to remain single, he urged me on his death-bed to marry again. Unfortunately I met no one I cared for until," she added, smilingly, "one Lancelot Challice took my fancy by his persistence."

"Isaia! Does that mean—"

"It means nothing at present," interrupted the lady, vivaciously. "Let me continue my story. As I said, Mr. Ingraham took charge of me after the death of my poor mother. He sent me to school, had me thoroughly well educated, and when I came of age married me."

"And you loved him," hinted her lover, jealously.

"No, said Mrs. Ingraham, pensively, "I did not love, but I admired and respected him. I trust I made him a good wife; but, alas! he died within a year of the marriage."

"After which?"

"After which there is nothing more to tell. I roamed about the world and met you in divers places. That is the end of my story, Lancelot, and that is how Isaia Stanley, the gypsy, became Mrs. Ingraham."

"What did your own people say to this?"

"Oh, they were rather pleased than otherwise. They well knew that however much of a great lady I became I would never forget that I was a gentle Rommany; and they were right, my friend. The leaven of gypsydom is strong within me."

"And hence the secret of your wandering!"

Mrs. Ingraham threw back her head with a long-drawn breath.

"I sicken of civilization at times," said she; "the atmosphere of London society is stifling. I must wander into solitary places, sleep under the open sky, and breathe the free forest breeze. You also feel this longing, do you not?" she questioned, eagerly; "this nostalgia of the wilds for road and tent?"

"I understand the feeling well, Isaia. Like yourself, I have a predilection for savagery."

"Ah! that is the Rommany drop in your veins. Yet I'll wager you take more kindly to the Gentiles than I, though, to be sure, it is but natural, as I am a pure-blooded gypsy, and you but half a one."

"Still, that half is royal," said Challice, slyly.

"Hail to Pharaoh," mocked Mrs. Ingraham; "but, indeed, we are wasting time in talking of such things. Do you not wish to know how I had you brought here?"

"I thought Jara did that."

"She was the doer, I the inspirer."

"As how?"

"For you to understand all," explained the lady, "we must take our thoughts back to Damascus—there, as you know, I refused to become your wife. My reason you can now guess. I knew not you had gypsy blood in your veins, and was resolved to marry no one but a Rommany Chal."

"Then how did you discover I was half a gypsy, for I did not know it myself?"

"I learned that much from Jara. When I saw you again in England I asked you to wait a year for an answer, resolved in the mean time to consult with the Mother of the Cales as to the advisability of my wedding a second time with a gorgio. I came hither, laid my difficulties before her, and found, to my surprise, that you were her great-grandson, and half a Rommany. Of course that removed all difficulties."

"It seems not," said Challice, dryly, "for you still refuse to marry me."

"H'm! I don't say 'yes;' I don't say 'no!' I but tell you to wait. But, to resume my explanation, Jara had always intended to send for you and reveal your Rommany ancestry. My story decided her, and she wrote, as you saw. You obeyed the summons, met Goliath at Palma, and the rest you know."

"Most of it, but I don't know why you concealed yourself in this pyramid instead of meeting me on my arrival."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Ingraham, coolly, "you are quite wrong. I left Egypt some time ago, and only returned to-day. As to being in this vault, I deemed our meeting safer here, knowing Pepa's malignancy. I have no desire to end my days by knife or poison."

"There is no fear of that. I don't love Pepa."

"Nor does Pepa love you. All the same, she intends to marry you and become Queen of the Cales."

"Jara has something to say to that. She detests Pepa."

"So do I," said she, emphatically; "so does every one. An evil-hearted woman. Woe to the Rommany should she become mother of our race. But it cannot be, unless," she added, significantly, "you marry her."

"Is it likely I would do so?" demanded Challice, in an injured tone. "But if you fear lest I should succumb to her fascinations why not marry me at once?"

"No! As I told you, I have my reasons. Next June, my friend. Meantime, we can stay here a few days before returning to England."

"Is there any necessity to stay?" said he, rising reluctantly. "Now that I know all, I wish to leave."

"Not yet," interposed Jara, at this moment; "you must wait, my son—you also, my daughter. Within

a week I hold a festival. Far and wide will the Rommany flock hither at my summons. Then shall I proclaim the son of my son's son, Pharaoh, and you, Isaia, the Queen of Cales."

Mrs. Ingraham looked at her lover with some embarrassment.

"You cannot tell me the name of the city till I wed with Lancelot," said she, in a low voice, "and that I cannot do till after June."

"Then or now, it matters not. Have I not read his hand and your hand? Your fates are joined. Rom and romi shall you become, and at the festival I tell you the name of Egypt."

"But Pepa?"

"Pepa shall never become queen. Listen, Isaia, and you also, my son. The sacred name must be told to the future mother alone, therefore I dare not speak it now. But hearken, children. I dread the evil heart of Pepa. It may be that I die of drao. If that should be it is well that you know the name, lest Pepa become queen despite of all. See, then, my daughter," added she, pointing upward, "the topmost stone of this pyramid bears the name cut in strange signs on the under part. Should I die by the evil arts of Pepa, and she proclaims herself Mother of the Cales, say then, 'It is not lawful! for none but she who knows the sacred name can rule.' Then will they say to thee, 'Tell the name to the

appointed three.' In that case, child, climb upward and read the name written on the stone. Reveal it to the appointed three who question, as is our custom. Then will they make thee queen, and drive forth the evil Pepa. I have spoken, children. See that I be obeyed."

Without further speech she hobbled up the stairs. Mrs. Ingraham motioned to Challice to extinguish the lamp, which he did in silence, and they then followed the old woman. Outside all was still and gloomy. Jara had disappeared, and it was Mrs. Ingraham who replaced the stone at the entrance. Having accomplished this task, she turned towards Challice and held out her hand.

"Good-night, brother," said she.

"Must we part here Isaia? Can I not see you home?"

"Home to my cave!" she remarked, laughing. "How terribly primeval it sounds. I live with Jara in the Cavern of the Idols."

"Horrible! Those nightmare images."

"I do not mind them in the least, Lancelot. My nerves are excellent. Also, I have more important things to think over."

"How to become Queen of the Cales."

"No!" she replied, shuddering. "I could not bear to dwell forever in this treeless valley. If I do become Mother of the Rommany, I shall cer-

tainly abdicate in favor of some one more desirous of the dignity."

"Pepa, for instance?"

"No! Pepa would bring woe to the Rommany. She must not become queen. In some manner we must contrive to circumvent her."

"I think that will be easy," said Challice, reflectively. "If we don't know the sacred name, we at least know where to find it. The top stone of—"

"Hush!" whispered Mrs. Ingraham, placing her hand over his mouth. "Are you mad? Did Pepa know that she would become queen, and then neither you nor I would leave this valley alive. She may be near us even now. It is as well that we part. Good-night—good-bye."

"When shall I see you again?" cried Challice after the flying figure.

"Noon to-morrow," floated back faintly; and with this vague promise he was forced to be content.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LORD OF THE HORSESHOE

Twice or thrice he remarked on the strangeness of meeting with Mrs. Ingraham amid such unfamiliar surroundings. Despite her latent primevalism, she was too civilized for the valley, and he also. Environed by an air of modernity, they were, in this position, anachronistic. Their attire struck a false note which displaced them from the harmony of cave and pyramid and bleak ravine. Nothing was so ironic as his gray suit and her smart travelling dress against the solemn background of this desolation. Summer flowers with winter snows were less irreconcilable.

Such isolation drew them together. Detached from gypsydom by superiority of education and upbringing, they sought in one another that necessary culture of mind undiscoverable elsewhere. Condemned to so narrow a groove, the one and the other, by stress of repetition, became well acquainted with their several idiosyncrasies. Other than marriage, no position was so favorable to analysis; therefore he and she learned rapidly the essentialities of one another's character.

Mrs. Ingraham found that the acts of Challice fell short of his ideals, yet these latter kept him on a sufficiently high basis for her to regard him as a man of sterling worth. He noted that her perfections were marred by a masterful spirit, and judged that as a wife she would be disinclined to yield obedience to her husband. Nevertheless, he hoped that this Amazonian quality might be neutralized by her frankly-avowed love. That two conflicting egotisms should unite in immediate harmony was scarce to be expected; yet, seeing by this companionship the faults and virtues of each other, they trusted by mutual yielding to make an ideal marriage. The materials were sufficiently promising to justify such a belief.

In obedience to the express wish of Jara, they remained in that dreary valley. The festival was appointed for the fifth day of the week, and after its consummation they intended to return to civilization. To this they looked forward eagerly, as, notwithstanding their gypsy blood, they could not assimilate themselves to the savagery of the place. There was nothing generous about that cleft—no kindly touch of nature, no softening of rugged rock or of gloomy cavern—only the aridity sweltering under the hot sun, or chilling in the moon-beams, with ever the voice of the water-fall continuously hoarse.

Yet the humanities were present. With the inroad of gypsies came loves and hates and merriments. A tide of healthy life ebbed and flowed herein to freshen the nightmare atmosphere, else it would have been scarce endurable. At times, also, the Rommany gathered round the pyramid for dance and song and interchange of news. The gay dresses of men, women, and children lightened the sombre environments, and their laughter rang cheerfully through the menacing thunder of the torrent. In the moonlight they lighted fires against the broad-based pyramid, and, dancing round them with laughter and song, humanized in some degree the eyrie gorge.

Thither came Mrs. Ingraham with her lover, and oftentimes were they watched by the jealous eyes of Pepa. She, hovering on the outskirts of the throng, took no part in the merrymaking, but with stealthy and malignant glances noted the lovers. While Mrs. Ingraham was present she made no attempt to attract the attention of Challice, and had apparently abandoned all hope of fascinating the young Englishman. Yet to his eyes there was something ominous in that flitting figure, and he dreaded lest she should strike at himself through Mrs. Ingraham. An expression of these presentiments was received by the latter with ill-concealed disdain. Evidently she deemed Pepa harmless as rival and enemy.

"Why should she wish to kill me?" demanded Mrs.

Ingraham. "Were I removed it would not help her to the queenship."

"Are you so sure of that, Isaia? She is a dangerous woman, whose heart is set on realizing her ambition."

"She can only realize it by becoming your wife, and I don't think my death would bring about the marriage."

"Isaia," said he, reproachfully, "how can you speak so, even in jest? My heart is yours only. Besides," he added, briskly, "she has to consider Jativo."

"She considers him an obstacle, no doubt," replied Mrs. Ingraham, playing on the word, "still, one which may be got rid of. However, he is safe in his cavern, and cannot interfere with her schemes."

"I should like to see him!"

Mrs. Ingraham raised her eyebrows with manifest surprise. "For any special reason?" asked she.

"Only to satisfy myself as to whether he is a man likely to be put aside for the gratification of a woman's ambition."

"Questionable," remarked the lady, doubtfully. "I have not seen him myself, but, from his acts, should judge him to be the slave of his romi. Twice has he tried to kill you at her bidding. Why go up to his cavern and risk a third attempt?"

"Oh, as to that, I have no fear. Pepa has long since abandoned that line of action. If she killed

me she would lose all; I am her stepping-stone, so to speak. But," continued he, with much earnestness, "I dread drao for you and Jativo."

"She might attempt such a thing while believing there to be a prospect of your marrying her. If convinced to the contrary, the committal of the crime would be useless."

"You think so?" said Challice, thoughtfully. "In that case, I shall go to Jativo, and place the matter beyond all doubt."

"A delicate errand!"

"Oh, I can be diplomatic on occasions. It is not my intention to blurt out the truth like a school-boy. I go to observe and consider. The result of my visit will depend on what I notice."

"At least take Goliath with you," was the parting remark of Mrs. Ingraham. Challice, not ill-pleased with her anxiety, took the advice, and forthwith sought the gypsy.

Goliath was timing his stay in Egypt by that of Challice. In part, a personal liking for the young man determined this resolution. Also, what with the failing health of Jara, the intrigues of Pepa, and the significant presence of Mrs. Ingraham, great events were pending relative to the queenship. Affairs of Egypt were dear to Goliath, so zeal for their well-being demanded his presence and closest attention. He disliked Pepa, and, bent on thwarting her

ambition, was vigilant in watching her every action. Conscious of this scrutiny, she hated the English Rommany, and but for his mistrust, which neutralized her craft, would speedily have freed herself from such espionage by poison or steel. So menaced, Goliath readily consented to visit Jativo, in the hope of checkmating his antagonist. A few significant words to the husband might render abortive the schemes of the wife. Jativo alone could control Pepa's devilments, and would certainly countenance no actions likely to be hurtful to himself.

"I shall come, brother," said Goliath, when Challice preferred his request. "It is as well to warn Jativo of Pepa's designs."

"To what end? She is working for him as for herself."

"No, rye. Jara will reveal the name of the city to none but your romi, and how can Pepa becomes such while Jativo lives?"

"You forget another and more important obstacle —Mrs. Ingraham."

"Pepa fears no woman, brother. When her rom dies, she will match her fascinations against those of the Rommany rani, and force you to love her."

"You can bring a horse to the water, but who can make him drink?" said Challice, disdainfully. "I shall tell Pepa plainly that there is no hope of my marrying her."

"She will not believe you! You are a man, and Pepa a witch. Who can say 'No' when a woman woos? Pepa's schemes are plain, brother. Jativo and the rani she will slay, and you she will marry. Jara will tell her the name, and Queen of the Cales she shall reign. Thou, brother," added Goliath, darkly, "shalt also die."

"So she requires four victims to secure the gypsy throne," said Challace, grimly. "A nice programme, truly, but the carrying out of which depends on my doings. Well, we shall see if I yield to this siren. Come, Goliath, let us see Jativo!"

"His cave is yonder," observed Goliath, pointing towards the water-fall.

"That hole high up in the cliff whence smoke issues?"

"Aye, brother. 'Tis the smoke of his forge, and at night flares redly. Follow me, rye, and I shall guide you hither."

"We climb the cliff?"

"No, brother; through the cave and up the stair. Follow!"

So saying, Goliath re-entered into their dwelling, and speedily emerged bearing a torch. Preceding Challice, he crossed the open space by the pyramid, and entered one of the houses on the opposite side. It was empty, as its old occupants had departed and the new had not yet arrived. Like all others, it was a

mere frontage masking a gigantic burrow. Goliath lighted his torch, and penetrated with Challice into the cavern. After a time they left the level, and ascended a rude staircase hewn out of the live rock. Here the ring of iron on iron became faintly audible.

"Jativo works," said Goliath, glancing back.

"And Pepa sings," rejoined Challice, as a bird-like voice trilled, through the measured clang of hammer on anvil,

"Fortune turns her wheel,
I see thee passing by;
Again she turns her wheel,
I see thee die."

The words were Spanish, and understood by Challice, who momentarily hung back at the ominous hint of Fate.

"Absit omen!" quoth he, shuddering.

The stairs ended at a moderate height, and, following a diagonal passage, they emerged into a lofty cavern, which, but an enlargement of the gallery, ended abruptly in the face of the precipice. On one side tongues of flame darted roofward from the forge, and pungent smoke rolled sideways out of the cave. On the other, Jativo, swinging a mighty hammer, beat a glowing horseshoe into shape on the anvil. Red-skirted Pepa leaned against the bellows handle,

smiling at her busy rom, who occasionally glanced at her fresh beauty. Anvil, forge, and sooty atmosphere, beautiful woman and grimy smith, were mythologically suggestive of Venus watching Vulcan.

At their unexpected entrance Javito paused with uplifted hammer and uninviting scowl. Pepa, clapping her hands with gleeful laughter, was the first to speak.

"Pharaoh comes to see his slaves," chanted she, derisively. "Bow, my rom, at Pharaoh's feet."

"Evil be his end," growled Jativo, crashing down on the horseshoe.

"Garishan!" said Goliath, taking no notice of the curse. Jativo, without lifting his eyes, muttered something in reply, and again Pepa addressed herself to Challice.

"Why does Pharaoh come hither?" said she, with a mocking intonation of voice.

"I am not yet Pharaoh, sister."

"No!" muttered she, between her teeth, "nor shall you be Pharaoh!"

"I do not see how you can prevent it."

Pepa shrugged her shoulders, and at a nod from Jativo began working the bellows. With hoarse roaring the flames leaped from the black ashes and lighted the four faces. There was a venomous look in Pepa's eyes, and Challice shrank back into the

shadow. Goliath also saw the glance, and commented thereon.

"Peak-eyed witch," said he, in Rommany.

"Ho, ho!" she laughed, spitefully. "You call me witch. Aye, brother, witchly am I! My spells can stay yon white-face from becoming Pharaoh. I'll steal the name by magic from Jara's lips, and then be queen."

Jativo glanced approvingly at her, and returned to the anvil, but Challice questioned his gypsy friend.

"What does she say?"

"Magical things, brother. She wants you not to be Pharaoh."

"I know her amiable intentions in that respect. But in spite of her wish I shall be Pharaoh and Isaia queen."

He raised his voice so that Pepa could hear.

"That you shall never be," said she, facing round, "unless—"

"Unless I marry you!"

"There is my rom," retorted Pepa, and walked away with a contemptuous look. Jativo raised his head as she departed, and looked at Goliath.

"What wish you here, brother?" he asked.

"To warn you," interposed Challice.

"A lie!" said Jativo, disdainfully. "By bullet and steel did I try to slay you, and now you come hither

to warn me. Injured men do not such kindness. It is a lie!"

"It is not a lie! If you are wise, listen," said Challice.

He cast a significant look at Pepa, which she rightly interpreted as harmful, and sprang forward to anticipate his further speech. Jativo showed a disposition to hearken, and knowing that the first blow is half the battle, Pepa thrust herself furiously between the two men.

"Ah! oh! ah!" said she, in shrill vituperation, "who is this coming 'twixt rom and romi? Now I see, if my eyes deceive not. It is the English diadikai who would be Pharaoh. Well do I know what you would say, evil dog. That I would wed with you and become Mother of the Cales."

"Aye, sister, and rid yourself of Jativo by drao."

Pepa, with brazen assurance, snapped her fingers, and whirled round to face her husband. He, silent and suspicious, looked inquiringly at her.

"Hear you that, my rom? I give you drao, my rom. What say you?"

Jativo pointed towards the mouth of the cave with a grim smile.

"Did I think so, Pepa, over there would you go. But it is foolishness, such talk. I am your lawful rom—you my romi. When I die you die. It is written."

For a moment Pepa winced at this savage answer. It was difficult to handle so surly a bear, but experience had rendered the task easy. With one bound she threw herself on his neck, and kissed him effusively.

"Oh, my tiny one," said she, in Rommany, "my delicate, dear, and darling rom. Am I not weaving spells to make thee Pharaoh, and wilt thou hearken to lies? I would wed him and kill thee. Aye! aye! This have I said, but the lips lie, and the heart is true. When my task is ended he and she (the accursed one!) will die, and we shall reign Pharaoh and Mother of the Cales."

"Have done, Pepa! We know one another. You speak true, and it is as well. Lie, and over the cliff you go."

At the menace of his tone Pepa's eyes glittered angrily, and with a petulent stamp of the foot, she turned away. It boded ill for her surly rom should she become Mother of the Cales. Still, her immediate desire being thus obtained, she smoothed her face, and confronted Challice with triumphant smiles.

"Hear you what he says, my Englishman?" said she. "But no! I forget! You know not the kalo jib. Tell him, my brother."

"It is no use, rye," exclaimed Goliath, in a low tone; "Jativo believes in his romi. Not till he dies from drao will he know how base is the witch."

"Is Pharaoh satisfied?" asked Pepa, not overhearing this complimentary speech.

"I am satisfied that your intentions are evil," replied Challice, frowning. "Listen to me, Pepa. Jara alone knows the name of the city, and to my wife alone will she reveal it. My future wife you know; but rest assured, whatever occurs, never shall I have ought to do with your evil heart."

"And yet," smiled Pepa, lightly, "you thought not ill of me when I danced for your pleasure."

"I dare say not," retorted Challice. "You are as pretty a devil as I have seen."

"Beware lest the devil devour thee!" said she, fiercely. Challice looked coldly at her, and turned towards Jativo.

"You chose to disregard my warning, brother, but e're I leave this valley you will remember it."

"Twice have I failed to slay," replied Jativo, with menace. "The third time is one of luck."

"Job!" roared Goliath, grasping the smith's shoulder with one huge hand; "the third time will be your death, not the rye's. Touch but a hair of his head, and I break your neck. My mark for your memory, brother."

With a shriek of mingled pain and anger Jativo sprang back. Goliath had forced his hand to the horseshoe glowing on the anvil. Challice uttered

an ejaculation, but Pepa laughed aloud. She did not disapprove of the action, and darted a look of admiration at the gypsy.

"Let that warn you," continued Goliath, kicking over the anvil. "The rye is my brother, and what harms him harms me. I war not on women, but with you as a foe I fight. Come, brother," he added, turning towards the astonished Challice, "let us leave these rats in their hole."

Jativo, groaning with pain, was seated by his overturned anvil. Making no effort to assist him, Pepa coolly produced and lighted a cigarette. As Goliath led the Englishman towards the exit of the cave she laughed again. Such merriment was not pleasant to hear. Disgusted at her heartless conduct, Challice paused a moment, and pointed at the groaning Jativo.

"Have you no pity?"

"Aye, brother, but not for my rom. You I pity! He shall live! you shall die."

"Death or life, Pepa, never shall you become Queen of the Cales."

She vouchsafed no reply to this remark, but began again her sinister singing:

"At dawn the grave-digger
To dig a pit began,
By night there we laid thee,
A murdered man."

As they hastily descended the staircase her laughter followed them in shrill mockery. When in the open air, Challice drew a long breath.

"What a woman!" said he, wiping his brow; "evil in all ways. She cares no more for Jativo than she does for me."

"Only for herself does she care, brother. Were her rom dying, she would sit there smoking at his death."

"You went too far, Goliath, in burning Jativo's hand."

"No, brother," replied Goliath, decisively; "the scamp needed a lesson. He might kill you in order to become Pharaoh. Now he will not do so. That burnt hand will keep him in mind of my promise to break his neck."

"Would you do so?"

"If aught happened to you, brother, I would crush him like a fly."

"I thank you, Goliath, but I trust you will not be reduced to such extreme measures. After this festival, I leave Egypt with Mrs. Ingraham."

"That cannot be; as future Queen of the Cales, she must remain here."

Challice looked round at the dreary scene and shuddered.

"It's like Dante's *Inferno*," he muttered. "Whatever happens, that must not be."

Of this he said nothing to Goliath, dreading lest it should displease so good a friend. All the same, he swore that nothing would induce him to let Isaia accept so onerous a dignity. They returned to their cave, at the entrance of which Goliath paused and spoke.

"One warning, rye," said he, solemnly. "Pepa has not finished with you yet. She is more dangerous to you than is Jativo."

"She means still to kill me."

"No! replied Goliath, decisively; she means still to marry you."

CHAPTER IX

FASCINATION

So strongly flamed the vertical sun on glittering pyramid and naked rock that the heat was well-nigh intolerable. The rays refracted from slag and basalt and sandstone made a molten furnace of the cleft. It seemed impossible that life could exist in such torridness. Secluded in their caverns the gypsies ameliorated this condition of things by sleeping during the hottest hours of the day. In solitary street and vacant hollow a noontide hush prevailed, accentuated rather than broken by the torrent's drowsy thunder.

Through the cave's entrance a scant measure of light creeping in hardly affected the twilight atmosphere. Here all was cool and dusky, a welcome relief from the exterior glare. A feeling of lassitude was in the air, and rendered somnolent the inmates of the cavern. Of these one (it was Goliath) lay supine, at the far end, in uneasy slumber, and the other, unable to close his eyes, brooded thoughtfully near the doorway. An expected visit from Mrs. Ingraham and many perplexing thoughts kept Challice awake.

As may be supposed, etiquette counted for little with the unsophisticated cave-dwellers. Certainly natural courtesies prevailed to some extent, but the regulations of society were as naught in their eyes—indeed, they were ignorant that such annoyances existed. All who came hither were vagrants, and unaccustomed to artificial restrictions.

Challice and Mrs. Ingraham could scarcely be classed among these, yet they also, after a time, lapsed into similar laxness. She, who would not have dreamed of calling at his bachelor chambers, paid him prolonged visits in his cave, without even the chaperonage of Goliath. For hours they would converse of matters important to themselves, and felt the subtle charm of such free intercourse. Their ingrained Bohemianism asserted itself strongly in this isolation, and Mrs. Ingraham neither hesitated to visit him, nor did Challice object to receive her at all hours.

The unfortunate result of his interview with Jativo made him anxious to see her again. Vexed by the indiscretion of Goliath in provoking still farther the enmity of the blacksmith, Challice wished to refer his perplexities to the clear judgment of Mrs. Ingraham. She, if any one, would see a way out of the entanglement, and know (from racial instinct) how best to deal with these dangerous people. With such elements of discord at work the outlook was any-

thing but pleasant, and fervently did Challice wish that he could cut the Gordian knot of such troubles by leaving the gorge. That he could not do until the festival was over, and at the festival he expected the crisis would come.

"The cards were turned by me,
To learn thy fate,
They boded ill to thee,
From hidden hate."

Challice looked up with a shiver, and saw Pepa standing in the doorway. Discarding the mantilla, she was costumed entirely in red, and looked full of trickery and maliciousness. Her sinister song ended, she twirled a flower in her fingers, and smiled at the startled expression on his face.

"Ay ai mi," said she, mockingly; "I am not the expected one."

"You certainly are not," retorted Challice, annoyed by her persistence. "Why do you come here?"

"Ah, why indeed, my brother! Pah! It is written! You have bar lachi."

"I have told you before, and I tell you now, that I carry no such rubbish. If you are wise, leave me."

"Alas! who is wise?" said Pepa, slipping down beside him. "Not I—at present. Oh, yes, my

timid dove, well I know why you wish me away. Your rani comes shortly, and you fear her anger—her jealous rage."

"There you are wrong, Pepa! She would never be jealous of you."

"She may have cause to yet."

Challice received this malicious suggestion with a scornful laugh. He greatly doubted Pepa's powers of fascination.

"Who laughs may weep," said she, guessing the reason of his mirth. "You, my English lord, are not the man to withstand red lips and bright smiles."

"Forewarned is forearmed," retorted Challice, countering one proverb with another. "I know you too well to believe in those soft glances. But knowing that Mrs. Ingraham will one day be my romi, I wonder you are not afraid of her anger."

"I value her anger as much as I do this flower."

She tossed the blossom contemptuously in his face with an insolent laugh, and, producing a cigarette, continued her speech with bent brows.

"So, Englishman, you lied to me!"

"When, and how?" demanded he, startled by the directness of this attack.

"You said she whom you loved was a Gentile."

"I said what I then believed. At that time I was as ignorant as you that Mrs. Ingraham had gypsy blood in her veins."

"The devil is in it that it should be so," muttered Pepa, frowning. "Ah, well, gray owl," she added, with a confidential nod, "you shall not marry her."

"So you say!"

"So the cards say, and the stars," retorted the gypsy, thrusting the cigarette between her lips. "Your lines of life touch and part. It is a true bahi."

"Bah! you said the reverse at our last interview. I suspect you invent prophecies to suit your own ends."

"Wise is she who can control Fate," replied Pepa, evading a direct answer. "If I can do so, rye, you may be sure I shall not permit the rani to become your wife and our queen."

"I am not sure that she cares about the office," said Challice, rashly.

Pepa's eye lighted immediately with eager inquiry. The remark pleased her.

"Ha!" said she, with incredulous joy, "think you so, my tiny one? Then take her away from Egypt."

"That I cannot do, Pepa. Jara—"

"Oh, Jara! Jara!" interrupted she, disdainfully; "think not of Jara! Old and weak and foolish, she must shortly die. Then I become Mother of the Cales."

"Tell me, Pepa," questioned Challice, looking

curiously at her brilliant face, "why do you wish for so melancholy an office?"

"It gives me power, and power I love," answered Pepa, proudly. "It is no light thing that my word should be law from east to west. I shall do great things for the Rommany. We are weary of wandering, and I would form our scattered tribes into a mighty nation."

"If you can chain the Rommany to one place, you are a clever woman, and fit to rule as queen. But such a thing is impossible. Race nature would be too strong for you. Moreover," added Challice, significantly, "as queen you must dwell in this dreary valley. I can imagine nothing more melancholy."

"I dwell not here forever," said Pepa, hitching up her shoulders. "There are fairer valleys than this in the Biscayan mountains. I may go thither, and dwell amid greenness."

"You are very ambitious."

"I was born so. All my life have I desired to rule after Jara. The lore of the Rommany I know well. Who so versed in our laws as I? Oh, I could rule! I could rule nobly!" she cried, springing to her feet. "All things do I know, save the name of this city. Could I learn that, queen should I be."

"Then ask Jara to reveal it, and be queen," said Challice, weary of this incessant harping on one string. Pepa made a gesture of impotent rage.

"Only your romi may learn it! Would I were the chosen one!"

With downcast lids she glanced demurely at Challice lying on the ground. The significance of the gaze troubled his consciousness. After all, he was a man, and she a pretty woman. Resolved to put an end to such hints and hopes and subtle dangers, he answered her, roughly,

"It cannot be! I marry Mrs. Ingraham. Remain you here with Jativo."

"Evil be his end," she muttered, sullenly. "I weary of his harsh ways. Look you, my brother," she continued, rapidly; "it is not wise that we should quarrel. I tried to have you slain by steel and bullet. That was folly, and failed as it deserved. You carry bar lachi, and naught can harm you. You gain thereby the love of all. You have won my love — aye, señor, frown as you will, it is true. I love you! I love you! I love you!"

Vehemently repeating the words, she held out her arms to Challice. He, now on his feet, shrank backward and surveyed her with mingled feelings of admiration and repulsion. With passionate eyes, heaving bosom, and stormy impetuosity, she looked beautiful and dangerous. There was something of the serpent's power of fascination about this wild creature, which at once allured and repelled.

Tempted as he was, Challice yet strove to keep

his head against the whirlwind of her passion. With significant smile and steady voice he repeated one name,

"Jativo!"

"Ah, think not of him," she cried, stamping her foot. "I hate him—I despise him! Give me your love," she said, drawing closer—"give me your love, and I shall kill him."

"No doubt," retorted Challice, coolly; "I quite believe you to be capable of any devilry. Are you not afraid of my telling Jativo?"

Pepa made a circular movement in the air with her forefinger, and laughed contemptuously.

"I can twist him like that," said she, with superb disdain. "You warned him yesterday, and what did he do? Laughed at you, and believed me. Oh, I can deal with these men as I choose. But you, my lord, you are strong and noble. Come to my arms, and we shall rule the Cales."

She made as though to fling herself on his neck, but, stepping back a pace, he pointed significantly to the sleeping man. Pepa uttered an ejaculation of rage.

"The English cur! ah, bah! who cares! He hates me, I know, but him also can I conquer. This is not the time to hesitate, señor. In two days is the festival. At it will be the chosen three. If Jara reveals the word to your romi, I lose all. Ah!

ah!" said she, throwing herself on his breast, "love me! love me! make me your romi, dear one."

Clinging to his neck, she looked into his eyes with passionate love. Confused and off his guard by the sudden tempest, Challice could but hold her in his arms, and stare as spellbound down on her eloquent face. What he would have said or done he knew not, for at that moment two small white hands griped Pepa by the shoulders, and whirled her halfway across the cave. Challice raised his eyes and saw not Mrs. Ingraham, but Isaia Stanley. The primal nature asserted itself over the artificial, and the cultured lady disappeared in the wild gypsy. With flashing eyes, she glanced from Pepa to her lover, and, seemingly from rage, was unable to articulate a word.

The noise had roused Goliath, who, still bemused with sleep, stood beside Pepa. Challice, knowing that appearances were against him, judged it wise to keep silent. Not so Pepa, who was the first of those present to recover her tongue, and burst out into voluble Rommany, mainly directed against Mrs. Ingraham. That lady, with staring eyes and dilated nostrils, lost no time in responding, and for a minute or so there was a furious duet. Challice would willingly have put an end to so painful a scene, but Mrs. Ingraham, with an imperious gesture, forbade his interference. He could not understand what

they were saying, but Goliath could, and presently began to laugh.

Enraged at his action, Pepa turned and struck him across the face; then, casting a look of contempt on Mrs. Ingraham, darted from the cave. Goliath followed, and the lovers were left alone. In the momentary silence between them, Pepa began singing in the distance, and, until her voice died away, no word was spoken.

Thus sang Pepa:

> "*To thee in the darkness I cried,*
> *And thou didst follow, beloved,*
> *For dawn found thee close by my side.*"

"You hear the message," burst out Mrs. Ingraham, tauntingly. "Why not follow her?"

"Isaia!"

So reproachful was his gaze that she dropped her eyes, and a flush passed over her face. Nevertheless, with true feminine obstinacy, she held to her opinion, instinctively wrong as she knew it to be.

"Explain! explain!" she cried, stamping her foot.

"There is nothing to explain," answered he, serenely.

"Do not mock me, Lancelot. I come here and find this woman with you — find her arms round your neck. What does it mean?"

"Nothing more than that Pepa is up to her old games."

"You have not encouraged her?" said Mrs. Ingraham, with jealous insistance.

Challice laughed at the absurdity of the question.

"You can take my word for it," said he, smiling. "Could I dally with a woman who sought my death?"

"If she loved you."

"Perhaps! But there it is! She does not love me! Our conversation was more about ambition than love. It is not my wife she desires so much to be as Mother of the Cales."

"Still—still—" hesitated Mrs. Ingraham, trying to think of some further objection.

Challice, clasping both her hands in his own, looked serious.

"I assure you, Isaia, this is false, love. I do not in the least care for Pepa. She is determined that I shall succumb to her arts, but that cannot happen while my heart is yours."

"And is it mine?" whispered she, doubtfully.

"I know of no other person likely to possess it. You must not be so jealous of me."

"I cannot help it. When I saw her on your breast I could have killed you both."

"The innocent with the guilty!" said he, trying to turn it off with a jest. "But if you feel so strongly, why not leave this place with me at once?"

"No!" said she, obstinately; "I promised Jara to remain for the festival. Moreover, I am determined to thwart the schemes of Pepa."

"What does it matter? You do not wish to be queen."

Mrs. Ingraham looked out on that barren world with an irrepressible shudder.

"No! I do not wish to be queen, certainly, but I have sufficient love for my own people to prevent Pepa ruling."

"Let the Rommany fight it out among themselves."

"I also am a gypsy!" she said, proudly, "and the welfare of my race I have at heart. Pepa's rule would bring us into collision with the Gentiles, and we are too weak in number to stand against them. Oh, I know well her ambitious nature. She must not rule, else it goes ill with our people."

"Then accept the queenship yourself."

"And dwell here! Impossible! Besides," she added, with a meaning smile, "before I learn the hidden name, I must become your wife."

"Is that a hardship?" asked he, somewhat nettled.

"It is the desire of my heart as you well know, but there are difficulties in the way."

"And those difficulties?"

"I shall tell you them in June. But," she said,

seriously, "when I tell all, who knows but what you may refuse to marry me?"

"I think that is impossible," he said, smiling.

"Well, we shall see."

"Does Jara know of these objections?"

"She does not. I do not tell her all things. If she thinks I am going to marry you, she will tell me the name, and I shall become queen. In that event, I shall surrender the authority to some other than Pepa, and thus can leave the valley. Then, when we get back to England, at the appointed time I shall tell you my reasons for the delay, and the matter will be at your discretion. You may marry me—you may not."

"I cannot conceive what the reason can be."

"No! Doubtless it will seem but a paltry one in your eyes. Nevertheless, some men would object. Besides, it is my whim."

"Ah, that is the true obstacle!"

"Perhaps! If a woman is worth winning, she is worth waiting for. Prove yourself a patient lover, and you shall receive your reward."

"And Pepa?"

"I am no longer jealous of her, and my confidence in you is completely restored."

Goliath, hot and dusty, interrupted them at this point.

"My brother! my sister!" he cried, much excited, "great dangers are in the future."

"What is the matter, Goliath?"

"Job!" said the gypsy, wiping his brow. "Jativo has left Egypt."

"How do you know that?" asked Mrs. Ingraham, quickly.

"I followed Pepa up to his cave, and he was gone. Then she told me he had departed."

"Has he completed his horseshoes?"

"No! and that is worst of all," said Goliath, doubtfully. "He must have some strong reason to thus disobey the Mother, and leave Egypt secretly."

"But why secretly? Jara must have seen him pass through her cave, as that is the only outlet."

"She may have slept," interposed Mrs. Ingraham. "She is old, and not the watcher she once was. But as to Jativo's reason for leaving Egypt, I can see it plainly."

"What is it?" demanded the men, simultaneously.

"He has gone to Palma in order to intercept The Appointed Three."

CHAPTER X

THE APPOINTED THREE

THE rejuvenescence of Jara began at this period. Interest in the forthcoming festival and the hope of thwarting Pepa's schemes had equal shares in the accomplishing of the miracle. No longer indulging in vague dreams of the past, she addressed herself to the necessary preparations for the solemnity, and daily received representatives of the gypsy tribes. These came from all parts of the world at her bidding to assist at the important ceremony of naming the new Mother. Constantly bands of wild folk arrived in the valley, and took up their abode in the caverns. On the day before the function the whole narrowness of the cleft was thronged with barbaric humanity.

Strange to say, Jativo had succeeded in eluding the vigilance of Jara, and in escaping from the gorge. The old crone was wroth at the man's disobedience, and it would have gone hard with him had he made immediate return. Jativo was too crafty to submit himself to such danger, and remained absent from Egypt. Doubtless he was satisfied that

Pepa would look well after their mutual interests, but unfortunately Pepa also fell under the ban of Jara's displeasure. It came about in this wise:

"Come hither, Pepa," said Jara, meeting her by chance near the pyramid. "Is it true that your rom has disobeyed my commands and left his cavern?"

"It is true," retorted Pepa, insolently; "I make no secret of it. He has departed to Palma. There shall he meet with and speak to The Appointed Three."

"Witch!" cried the old woman, furiously. "Dare you to speak so to me? Am I not the Mother of the Cales? Owe you not obedience to me?"

Pepa faced the angry crone without blanching, and in mockery sang a snatch of evil meaning:

"Angry words need no reply;
When the speaker's breath is failing,
In thy grave thou soon wilt lie."

"To thy home, girl," said Jara, smiting the ground with her staff. "Taunt me not with death. Soon must I die, but ere my breath fails I shall balk your ambition."

"That you cannot do."

"Aye, that I can do! Are my hundred years of wisdom as naught against your handful of months? An evil queen would I give the Cales in telling the name to you. Enough! you red witch! Too long

have I spared you. Now I shall be obeyed. To your cave."

Pepa, looking defiantly at the Queen, would have resisted, but the lowering looks of the gypsies around warned her against adventuring too far. Making a virtue of necessity, she twisted on one foot and retreated—not without mockery and many Parthian shafts.

"My young wits against your old ones, mother," she sneered. "Death sits on that wrinkled brow. When thou art dead, I reign. The stars have said it, and who is Jara to cross their ruling? You rule to-day, I to-morrow. Go into the darkness beyond the years, old mother. Well do I know your fate:

"'I enter,' said she, at the door;
'Tis Heaven shines inside:'
'Then enter,' said the evil one,
And hell's gate opened wide.

Ha! ha! old mother, red fire for your old bones."

Several Rommany, indignant at these insults, ran after the daring Pepa, but she, eluding them with much dexterity, vanished into one of the caverns. Her derisive laughter angered them greatly.

"Come back, my children!" cried Jara, imperiously; "evil lives have evil ends. I shall punish the wrong-doer. Leave her to Jara."

She nodded cheerfully to the crowd, and hobbled

back to her cavern with a heavy heart. In spite of the brave front she opposed to Pepa, there was much in the young gypsy's demeanor which caused her serious uneasiness. Unless Pepa had some sure card to play she surely would not dare to act in so defiant a manner. When back in her own dwelling-place Jara sat down to ruminate on Pepa's insolence.

"Pepa cannot know the name," muttered she; "and only such knowledge would make her so daring. I have breathed it to no human being. I alone know the name of Egypt. Can it be that she has been informed of the pyramid stone? The son of my son's son is aware of that! It may be that he has revealed it to her by chance. Her evil beauty has snared his heart to its undoing."

The idea that such a thing might be tormented her greatly. Pepa was beautiful, reckless, and cunning past all knowledge; so, seduced by her devilries, it was possible that Challice had revealed the secret. Much perturbed, the old woman straightway sent for the Englishman. It was best, she thought, to know and face the worst.

"If such be the case," she said, when her messenger departed, "I must find some means to remove her from hence. With The Appointed Three must she die."

When Challice arrived she made him sit near her,

and at once questioned him concerning his dealings with Pepa.

"Is it true, child," said she—"is it true that you visited Pepa in the cave of her rom?"

"It is true, mother."

"You were alone?"

"No! Goliath was with me—Jativo with her! We had no conversation together."

Jara, satisfied with this information, drew a breath of relief, and pursued her examination.

"Has she visited you?"

"Two days ago, in my cave."

"Alone?" she asked, anxiously.

For the moment Challice hesitated, not being quite sure what answer to make. Noticing this wavering, Jara's face darkened, and she laid her hand appealingly on the arm of the young man.

"Tell all! tell true," she said, meaningly; "fear not to own all to me. Only by knowing the truth can I hope to baffle that red witch."

"There is not much to tell," replied Challice, somewhat surprised at her solemnity. "I was alone with Pepa, yet not alone, for Goliath was sleeping at the end of the cave."

"She is an evil one, that Pepa, my son. Well I know her desire to be your romi and Queen of the Cales. Did you fall into the snares of her evil beauty?"

"No," said Challice, heartily. "She tried her best, but Isaia arrived and sent Pepa away."

"You do not love Pepa?"

"Not in the least. You know well, mother, that I desire to marry Isaia. Why do you ask me these questions?"

"I know how witchly is Pepa, child, and I fear lest you should have revealed the secret of the pyramid to her greedy ears."

"About that stone? No, I have neither thought nor spoken of it."

"You are certain of this?" demanded Jara, eagerly.

"As certain as that I am sitting by your side."

"She must then be ignorant of the name," reflected Jara, in a low voice. "Without such knowledge she is powerless."

"Is Pepa giving further trouble?" inquired Challice.

"She has given nothing else but trouble, child," replied Jara, bitterly; "but I shall crush her yet. Not lightly shall she dare my authority."

"I suppose she is trying to learn the name of the city?"

"Aye, aye! but that she cannot do save from me. She and her rom are foolish children, who think to discover it from The Appointed Three."

"I heard that Jativo had gone to Palma to see them."

"It is true, fool that he is," chuckled Jara. "He deems they know the hidden name, but as yet they are ignorant. Not until Jara's breath is failing is that revealed to the three, and to the future Mother."

"Who are The Appointed Three?" demanded Challice, whose curiosity had never been satisfied on this point.

"It is our custom, child," explained Jara—"it is our custom that none know the name of this city save the Mother. It was told to me many years ago, and so I became Queen of the Cales. Now I tell it to thy romi, and she in her turn will rule. Yet it may be," added the crone, slowly, "that one claims the queenship without knowing the name. To avert so great a disaster, three men are appointed—three old, feeble, dying men—and to these also does the departing Mother reveal the name. When the new Queen is questioned by the three concerning the name, she tells it to them, and they, knowing she speaks truly, proclaim her Mother of the Cales. Thus, my child, are all dangers averted from the Rommany."

"But by that arrangement four people know the name," dissented Challice.

"Did I not say that The Appointed Three are old, feeble, and dying? When their task is ended, and the new Mother is proclaimed, then they die."

The deadly menace in her tones struck a chill

into the heart of Challice. He felt the hair bristle on his scalp.

"Die!" repeated he, in a low voice. "Do you kill them?"

"They are already dying," repeated Jara, doggedly. "We do but aid the inevitable. Of their own free will do they undertake the risk, and know when it is ended they must not live."

"But it is murder."

"No, child; they die by their own hands, of their own free will."

"And the three who are now at Palma?" stammered the young man.

"They shall live long enough to learn the name from me, hear it from your romi, and then, their task being ended, die."

"They do not yet know the name?"

"None but Jara hath that knowledge."

"Then the errand of Jativo is useless?"

"Quite useless. He may question, but they cannot answer. They are ignorant of what he desires to know. Pepa, thinking to learn the name without my aid, is triumphant now—she will be humble shortly," finished Jara, spitefully.

"Have these three men mortal diseases?"

"The first is a leper, my child, the second far gone in consumption, and the third with old age totters on the verge of the grave."

This answer mitigated in some degree the horror of Challice. If the three men were in such dire straits no earthly power could save them, therefore the hastening of the inevitable end was less appalling than he thought. Much interested in these revelations, which revealed a new and darker side to the Rommany character, he questioned Jara further.

"When you reveal the name to the new Queen, must you also die?"

"Not in that way, child," she answered, with a toothless smile; "but I must die soon of old age. When I reveal the name to your romi I retire to my cave, and there wait the coming of death. No longer do I see the sun or walk forth among my people. I die! I die! and none care to lament over my death. Ay di mi," she wailed, tossing her arms in the air, "how cruel are the years. They beat and crush our bodies to the earth. This body, my child, was once fresh and fair as that of Pepa. Look at it now —a withered husk, a wrinkled sheath. But Death is kinder than the years. He will draw my soul forth from this old flesh and give it a new dwelling."

"You mean that your soul will become incarnate in another body?"

"Who knows?" mumbled Jara, plucking her red cloak around her. "We say these things, and be-

lieve that the soul cannot die, but who knows? We tell our children that in another world evil is punished and good rewarded, but who knows? It may be we lived in a former life and died into this existence, and are born by death from this into a new life to die again into another, but who knows? Ah!" she muttered, shaking her old head, "wise men say these things, but the youngest child is as wise as they in such matters. We may live, we may be stamped out of existence, but who knows—who knows?"

After this outburst she relapsed into silence, and not one word could Challice draw from her. Over the fire she crouched with spread hands, muttering words to herself in a strange tongue. There was something fearsome in this aged woman sitting by the dying fire, and Challice made haste to leave that unholy cavern. From the platform in front of her dwelling he looked up the street, and saw it was crowded with people in many-colored raiment. The sound of many voices, bursts of laughter, and snatches of barbaric melody around the grim black rocks, and overhead the cerulean arch of the sky.

"Oh, for herb or tree or grassy sward!" he muttered, descending into the crowd. "My eyes ache for the tint of green. Surely the Romnany chose this iron-bound valley from its very dissimilarity to

their ordinary existence. Savage, inhospitable, sombre, it must be like a foretaste of hell to their forest-loving nature."

Goliath was waiting for him near the pyramid, and hailed his approach with loud satisfaction. The look of anxiety on his usually merry face did not escape the observant eye of Challice.

"What is the matter, Goliath?" he asked, when greetings were over.

"Be silent, my brother," said the gypsy, in English, casting a significant look on the crowd. "Come to our cave; I have much to tell you."

With a prophetic instinct of coming woe, Challice followed his guide. When they were safely arrived he at once repeated his former question—

"What is the matter?"

"Oh, my brother," replied Goliath, quickly, "Pepa is again at her tricks! This time she means danger."

"I don't think she ever means anything else," said Challice, bitterly. "I wish somebody would throw her into the torrent."

Goliath nodded his head in grim approval. The savagery of the remark was greatly to his liking.

"That will be the end of it, rye, and a good job, too."

"Well, what is she doing now?"

Goliath looked apprehensively around to make

sure that they were alone, and then approached his mouth to the ear of Challice.

"She is preparing poison," he whispered.

"Poison!" repeated Challice, in a startled tone. "For whom?"

"For you—for me—for the rani—aye, my brother, for us all."

"How do you know this?"

"Last night, brother, I was in the street, and saw Zargo enter Egypt from Jara's cave."

"That is Pepa's dwarf?"

"Aye, brother; an evil thing he is—the devil who works her witchery spells. I knew he had fled with Jativo to see The Appointed Three at Palma, therefore I seized him, and asked questions."

"He lied, I suppose?"

"Lied, brother, as only an evil Fleming can lie. He denied that he had been to Palma, and that Jativo had sought out the Three. Not a word of truth did he speak."

"And you?"

"I, brother?" said Goliath, with a complacent smile. "I held him over the gulf of the torrent, and promised to drop him in if he told not the truth. He knows well I keep my word, and revealed all."

"All what?"

"All of Pepa's devilries," replied the gypsy, im-

patiently. "Jativo is now at Palma with The Appointed Three, trying to learn from them the name of the city."

"So much waste time on his part," said Challice, ironically. "The Three do not know the name of the city—as yet."

"Good! it is good!" repeated Goliath, stolidly. "I knew Jara would be too clever for that. But Zargo also told me, brother, that Pepa had sent him down the mountains to collect herbs."

"And for what?"

"To make poison. I forced Zargo to give the herbs to me, and threw them into the torrent. So you see, brother, I have drawn the serpent's fangs."

"You did wisely, Goliath. She can do nothing now."

"Not until Jativo arrives. He will doubtless bring back more herbs, brother. Then can she brew her hell-broth and slay us in secret."

"Jativo will be too much afraid of Jara's anger to venture here."

"Not if he comes with The Appointed Three, my brother. When they are in the valley no gypsy can be touched, even by the Mother, till the festival ends. When it does, Pepa will be queen, and Jativo safe."

"Pepa shall not be queen, Goliath. I can promise you that."

Goliath shook his head doubtfully. He had a wholesome dread of Pepa and her deadly malice.

"She is a witch, brother," said he. "We must watch her and Jativo, else never will we leave this place alive."

"Well, we shall see," remarked Challice, thinking of what Jara had said ("before Pepa becomes queen she must learn the name"). "As Jara refuses to tell it to her, I do not see how she can achieve her ambition."

As he ended his speech a hubbub arose in the gorge, and they ran out to see what was the matter. Down the street poured the crowd in the direction of Jara's cave, which, as has been before stated, served as an entrance to the valley. Pressing through the throng Challice and his gypsy friend managed to get a glimpse down the street.

"What disturbs our people?" asked Goliath of a by-stander.

"The Appointed Three have arrived, brother."

They tottered slowly along, three wrecks of humanity—the leper, the consumptive, and the old man. To the entrance they had been borne in litters, but gypsy etiquette demanded that they should walk to the pyramid. These men, foredoomed by Nature and their kinsfolk to death, bore on their wasted features the impress of a deadly terror. Arm in arm they toiled painfully upward amid the silent

crowd. From far lands had they come hither to die in this barren cleft, and the goal had now been reached. It was a carnival of death, and chilled the very soul of Challice with horror. There was something hellish about the sepulchral pageant.

Closing his eyes he turned away, and would have retreated to his cave but that Goliath touched his arm and whispered,

"Jativo!"

Challice turned, and saw his enemy following the three walking deaths. He looked despondent, and gave signs of having failed in his mission. A chuckle sounded in his ear, and he found Jara by his side, leaning on her staff.

"He follows them to the grave," said she, with prophetic insight.

CHAPTER XI

THE FESTIVAL

Contrary to all reasonable expectation the festival took place during the hours of darkness. Whether this was for the avoidance of noonday heat, or because the genius of the solemnity demand the presiding of moon and stars, Challice was unable to learn. Knowing the significance ascribed to the spheres by gypsy lore, he thought the latter reason the more probable of the two. Lunar and stellar influences count for much with untutored races, and the sidereal heavens, emblematic of life's infinite subtleties, are as an open book, perused with tireless devotion for the unriddling of futurity. From the far East had the Rommany brought with them such astrological beliefs, and doubtless selected midnight for their festival, as sanctified by the confluence of favorable planets.

All day the gorge presented its normal appearance of desertion and desolation. Few gypsies were visible in street or hollow, and only at sundown did they emerge from their subterranean retreats. Solitary figures at first, afterwards scattered groups, finally

innumerable bands. For some inscrutable reason, men and women alike were arrayed in white garments. No children were present. A ghostly company, they filled the hollow with noiseless celerity. The moon had not yet shown her orb over the peaks, and in the solemn darkness this silent throng was as a gathering of the dead.

A dais was erected near the pyramid, and hereon were seated The Appointed Three. These, closeted with Jara during the day, had learned the sacred name, and now were about to participate in their final portion of the ceremony. To them, one by one the chosen queen would whisper the mystic word, and they, vouching for her accuracy, would proclaim her true Mother of Cales. Afterwards the dying trio, with Jara as guide, would descend beneath the pyramid, to be seen no more of mankind.

In obedience to a hasty summons, Challice had proceeded to the Cavern of the Idols for an interview with Jara. On the way thither he was relieved to hear from Goliath that the ensuing ceremonies were not entirely of a gruesome nature. Dance and song, and feast and wine were to enliven the proceedings, and show the more human side of the Rommany character. Yet the sight which met his eyes on entering the cavern gave no sign of such a merry futurity. Rather did it hint at distressful circumstances.

Mrs. Ingraham, muffled in a white burnoose, was seated near the fire, with tightly clasped hands, and a look of dogged obstinacy on her face. Jara, much agitated, stood beside her, and the pair were evidently in the thick of a furious argument when Challice entered. Both relapsed into silence at his appearance, and, for the space of a moment or so, he gazed at them in silence. His looks were principally directed towards Jara. The garb and demeanor of the old crone fascinated him greatly.

Draped in a yellow cloak, she leaned on an ebony staff, and wore a rudely-fashioned silver crown, symbolic of her office. It was the first sign of regality Challice had seen her assume, and did not accord ill with her ancient majesty. Strange to say, her decrepitude showed signs of renewed vitality. Excitement had straightened her bent figure, added lustre to her eyes, and given her back for the moment a portion of her youth. It was the last effort of an indomitable spirit to conquer time and decay. Mind was struggling against matter, but the ultimate result was a foregone conclusion.

"Come hither, my son," she cried, querulously, "she who promised to be your romi now refuses to keep her word."

"I did not promise," said Mrs. Ingraham, angrily.

"I say you did!" retorted Jara, striking the ground furiously. "Am I then so old as to forget

such things? Who was it came hither and revealed her desire to wed with a Gentile? Who, but you, Isaia Stanley? Who was it told you that your lover was a Rommany — the son of my son's son? Who, but I, Jara, Mother of the Cales? All has gone smooth for your love. I have brought hither your much desired rom — I arranged to make you Ruler of all, and now, forsooth, you make sport of my scheme."

Challice was about to interpose, but Mrs. Ingraham made answer almost before the old woman ended her speech.

"It is true that I love Lancelot," she said, quietly. "I wish him to be my rom, but as yet I cannot give a definite answer. There are Gentile matters to be considered as well as Egyptian affairs. Not until June, not until I return to England, can I reply to his request."

"Then Pepa must become queen," cried Jara, despairingly; "that red witch will rule evilly, but well. Refuse your rom, and I tell her the secret name."

"Pepa shall not become queen," said Mrs. Ingraham, jealously. "She would bring woe to the Rommany. One moment, mother, and I shall see if I can meet your views. Mr. Challice," she added, rising from her seat, "come aside with me for a moment."

He obeyed her in silence, and together they walked apart while Jara knelt before the fire with many furious mutterings. When out of ear-shot, Mrs. Ingraham took her lover's hand.

"I am going to put you on your honor," she said, in a low voice. "To thwart Pepa it is necessary that I become your romi. As we are in Egypt, we must marry according to the fashion of Egypt. So much will satisfy Jara, and all will go well. But promise me," continued she, touching his breast, "promise me that the ceremony will not be binding. That you will leave me free to accept — or — refuse your offer when we return to civilized lands."

"You put a heavy burden on me," he replied, grudgingly, "but as I gave my promise to wait till June, I am ready to abide by it. Marry me gypsy fashion if you choose, become Queen of the Cales, and I swear to hold or relinquish you, as you decide in England."

She bent forward and kissed him on the lips. At the caress he trembled greatly, but took no advantage of such momentary yielding. That it was a sop to Cerberus, he knew perfectly well, and the irony irritated him.

"You have taken a weight off my mind," she said, with a sigh of relief. "I can now satisfy the scruples of Jara, and thwart Pepa's reckless ambition."

"No thought about me, I see," said he, with some bitterness.

"Oh, if you play the martyr," she began, impatiently, "you—"

"I shall not play the martyr," replied Challice, quietly turning away; "let us say no more about it. You have your wish, and I am content."

Woman-like, she was prepared to change her mind on the spot, and withdraw her objection. Had he remained still, she would doubtless have thrown herself in his arms and consented then and there to be his lawful wife. His change of position lost him the golden opportunity, and, ashamed of her momentary femininity, she returned to the side of Jara. Challice followed reluctantly. Her willingness to use him as a cat's-paw wounded his pride. However, he had accepted the somewhat ignoble position, and was forced to be philosophic. This pseudo-marriage relegated him to the position of a marital Tantalus.

"Let it be as you wish, mother," said Mrs. Ingraham, touching Jara on the shoulder. "Marry me to Lancelot by gypsy law. Then I shall be his romi, and you can carry out your designs."

Jara arose to her feet with much alacrity, casting, as she did so, a swift glance at Challice. He did not look a happy bridegroom, and with sudden suspicion she addressed them both, sharply:

"You are agreed on this point, my children?"

"Quite agreed," they simultaneously replied, and with such verbal expression of sincerity she was satisfied.

"Come, then, my children," said she, briskly moving towards the door; "let us seek the pyramid and my waiting gypsies."

During this colloquy Goliath had discreetly remained without. When the trio came forth he lighted a torch and preceded them up the street. Rejecting all aid, Jara painfully climbed the steep with the help of her staff, and in a wonderfully short period, considering her age, arrived in the crowded hollow. Here she seated herself on a low stool in front of the arbitrators, indicated places right and left to her companions, and signified her pleasure that the festival should begin.

It was a singularly weird scene. The white-robed crowd moving recklessly under the glare of innumerable torches, the irregular outline of the rocks daunting the sky on every side, and those three deaths sitting silently in the shadow of the pyramid. Above, the glancing splendors of the sidereal arch roofing the valley, and a note of menace struck through all by the sliding torrent. A phantasmagoria of black and white shadows evolved from the unseen rather than kindly earth and warm humanity.

Unexpected music pealed out in the darkness. A

band of Russian gypsies began singing with an abruptness which added greatly to the effect of their wild ditties. On all that great multitude was laid a spell of silence, and only the torrent's murmur could be heard rolling a deep bass to the varying treble of the singers. Wayward as the wind and as fitful, the barbaric strains arose, fell, arose again with irregular pulsation. From the even flowing of many voices, one alone would, lark-like, spring upward, and hover tremulously sweet on treble heights. Another would follow, a third, a fourth, then the harmonious crying of many throats, and the vibrating notes would sink downward, dying away in sobbing lowliness. It was like the pursuit and capture of some flittering tune, infinitely fanciful, irresistibly alluring.

"Such must be the music of fairy-land," said Challice, when the applause had ceased.

"Scarcely so melancholy, I hope," replied Mrs. Ingraham, rendered pensive by the sad strains.

"Ah, you see they adapt their songs to the genius of this treeless waste. Who could sing merry ditties in the Valley of the Shadow?"

"Here are the Hungarians," said she, "now we shall hear war melodies."

The Czigany songs were like the mad galloping of horses. Fierce cries pealed skyward from brazen throats. At a breakneck speed the melody rushed onward, gathering fresh impetus at every bar. Ab-

ruptly the torrent of sound would cease, and a single voice utter plaintive notes of despair and anguish. Again the minor key would be overwhelmed by the gush and roar of strident clamor. Such passionate fierceness, such clarion voices, sent the blood spinning through the veins. Carried away by the clangor, the listeners leaped to their feet when the singing ended. It was some considerable time before the excitement subsided.

"Had Dryden heard this singing," said Challice, "he would have added another verse to his famous ode."

After this, food and wine passed round the multitude. Usually a temperate race, on this special night the gypsies abandoned themselves to unbridled revelry. The wine sang in their brains, stripped them of self-control, and accentuated the ruling passion of each and all. Some laughed, danced, sang, others wept with many sighs. At times the throng would whirl in confused mazes as seized with vertigo, and sink with incoherent chattering in disordered groups. On all sides could be heard the twanging of mandolins, the vibrations of guitars, the stridulation of castanets.

Only those on the dais were free from this delirium. The silent three, veiled from head to foot, were already denizens of another world. They looked at the madness of the throng from the grave's

threshold. Jara, her chin resting on her staff, eyed dancers, drinkers, mourners, with a changeless smile. With irrepressible shudderings, Challice and Mrs. Ingraham gazed in each other's pallid faces. Death behind, madness before, they could scarcely breathe in the stormy atmosphere of light and shadow. All was monstrous and unhuman, the nightmare of a fevered brain.

"I feel as though I were on the Brocken summit," whispered Challice. "Surely the Walpurgis night was not more fantastical than this."

"It cannot last long," replied Mrs. Ingraham, shuddering. "If they ply them thus with wine, none will be in a fit state to comprehend the proclamation."

"I do not see Pepa here."

"Nor Jativo. Yet I am certain they will yet appear and cause trouble."

"It is too late for that," said Challice. "Soon you will be queen."

"Nevertheless, Jara has not yet revealed to me the name, and, as you know, there is many a slip. I shall not feel safe until I am queen. Be sure Pepa is planning some evil."

The moon wheeled majestically into view. A gush of light sported over the peaks and filled the hollow with glimmering lustre. Striking downward the torrent glinted sparks of weak fire, and the torches paled in the glare.

The delirium had died away, leaving a feeling of lassitude in the limbs of all. Inclined by such weariness to quieter diversions, they watched the juggling of an eastern Rommany. Five or six platters of brass spun above his head, and these were latterly exchanged for knives, which he manipulated with much dexterity. Delighted as children, the onlookers applauded loudly.

On his retirement bands of dancing-girls in gaudy raiment appeared. Stringed instruments and sweet breathing pipes played delicately as they contorted their bodies in the Indian Nautch. Afterwards the movement and music became more vigorous. To the rhythm of cymbals, castanets, and tambourines, they bounded nimbly in the air. Linked hand in hand, they extended into lines, contracted into whirling groups, and gyrated into pliant circles. Poised on tip-toe, with thrown back heads, they executed intricate figures, their bare arms beating the air. The musicians began a low-toned chant, which inspired them to further exertions. When voices and music rose to a pitch of frenzy, the dancers reeled out of sight, and were scattered, lost in the crowd.

"And still no Pepa," said Challice, yawning.

"Wait!" replied Mrs. Ingraham, darkly.

Weary of the prolonged revels, Jara had several times impatiently nodded to intimate that they

should end. The night was drawing towards the dawn, and already the moon had dropped behind the western peaks. As Challice and Mrs. Ingraham were to be wedded in gypsy fashion, before the proclamation of the latter as queen, there was much to do. Judging that the time had come for action, Jara raised herself unsteadily to her feet. Thrice she clapped her hands, and absolute silence prevailed.

Scarcely had she opened her mouth when the rattle of castanets was heard, and Zargo ran into the open space before the dais, followed by a figure in red garments.

"Pepa!" exclaimed Challice, glancing significantly at Mrs. Ingraham.

"Now we shall have trouble," she murmured, with prophetic insight.

With the greatest assurance, Pepa bounded towards Jara. The old woman regarded her with ill-concealed aversion, but, unwilling to disturb the prevalent tranquillity, gave no outward sign of anger. Thus, by cunning audacity, had Pepa triumphed at the outset.

"Forgive me, O Mother of the Cales, for my evil-doing," said she, in a humble voice. "My rom and me you have punished, and hither we come to beg pardon."

At her beck Jativo emerged from the crowd, and

together they knelt at the feet of Jara. Despite contrite attitude and downcast eyes, Jara felt the menace of such daring.

"You have sinned against our laws, you have disobeyed the Mother of the Cales," she replied, harshly. "I cannot forgive you."

"By the law of the Rommany a boon asked of the Mother must be granted on this night," replied Pepa, meaningly. "Before you give us our new Mother, I ask pardon of you for myself and my rom."

Jara saw plainly that the cunning Pepa had set a trap, into which she had fallen. By gypsy law she was forced to grant the last request asked of her as queen, and in the face of her people was unable to refuse the petition.

"Have your wish, child of Satan," she muttered, furiously. Then, raising her voice, "My children," said she, "these have sinned and repented. As the last act of my rule, I restore them to the privileges of the Rommany."

The short-sighted crowd, not knowing how their queen had been overreached, shouted vociferously. Pepa, rising to her feet, thanked Jara with ostentatious loudness for the mercy she had shown. Then she proceeded to bewail the passing of Jara.

"Alas! alas!" she cried, with hypocritical weeping, "how we shall miss this kind heart when it de-

parts. Never again shall we find so dear a Mother. May she who comes be as noble as she who goes. Alas! alas!"

The Rommany joined in her lament, and wept aloud. Jara could have struck Pepa for her action, but was forced to forbear and accept in grim silence these crocodile tears. With an evil smile on her face Pepa glanced at the lovers, and bent forward to whisper in the ear of Mrs. Ingraham—

"You are not yet queen," said she, viciously.

"In a few minutes," retorted Mrs. Ingraham, coldly.

"We shall see," replied Pepa, with a scornful laugh, and turned away. The lovers looked apprehensively at one another. On what evil-doing was this woman now bent?

"In gratitude for your forgiveness, my Mother," said Pepa, again bending before Jara, "I crave permission to dance before you. The Wine Dance," she added, loudly.

"The Wine Dance!" echoed the crowd with delight, and, overborne by their clamor, Jara was forced to yield that which she would gladly have refused. Pepa was again triumphant.

"The Wine Dance!" said Jara, sinking down on the seat and darting a look of hatred at her enemy. Pepa smiled with bland deference.

In the red glare of the relighted torches she flung

herself into a graceful attitude, and waited for the music. Zargo lustily smote the strings of his guitar, and as the notes vibrated through the chilly air she began dancing. With rhythmic click of the castanets she timed the music, and floated gracefully in a circle. The torchlight concentrated in one place threw her shadow on the ground, and to this she began dancing. With bow and beck and inviting gesture she caressed the flitting phantom. She fled, it pursued; she strove to catch it, it eluded her grasp. Quicker and quicker the music sang out, and sharper rang the castanets. At length she tossed them lightly on the ground, and whirled herself into a graceful pose before Jativo.

The blacksmith presented two goblets of wine. One of silver she took in her right hand, the other of gold in her left. Although they were brimmed to the edge she spilled no drop. Dexterously altering the character of the music, Zargo played a slow, seductive movement, and Pepa began her bacchanalian dance. Uplifting the goblets, she revolved in rapid circles, yet so careful were her movements that no wine fell to the ground. Again, she placed one cup on her head, and, changing the other from hand to hand, danced with miraculous balancing of both. The onlookers held their breath, expecting every moment to see the goblet fall; but, in spite of her apparently careless swaying, no such accident hap-

pened, and she caught it in her hand amid frenzied applause. During this she danced slowly up to the dais, and held out the golden goblet to Jara.

"Drink from my cup, Mother of the Cales," she said, "and I shall drink from thine."

Thinking it was her intention to poison Jara, both Challice and Mrs. Ingraham made a simultaneous movement. Jara, however, did not need their help; she was equal to the occasion.

"Take you the golden cup, my child," said she, pointedly, "and give me to drink of the silver goblet."

Pepa changed color and hesitated, thereby confirming the suspicions of the three before her.

"It is not meet that the Mother should drink from aught but golden vessels," she said, in a faltering voice.

"The silver for me, the gold for thee," replied Jara, mockingly.

With the eyes of all on her, Pepa was forced to give Jara the cup of wine she had reserved for herself, receiving what was without doubt the poisoned drink. Her face grew yet paler, and her lips moved convulsively as she saw Jara drain the silver goblet and wait for her to follow such example with the golden.

"Drink!" said the Mother, casting her cup on the ground, "drink!"

"I cannot," faltered Pepa, looking with loathing at the golden cup.

"Drink!" hissed Jara, in low tones, "drink that poisoned wine, or I will tell your design to my children, and have you thrust into yonder chasm."

Fearful of such a fate, Pepa hesitated no longer, but with shaking hand conveyed the cup to her lips. The next moment it was drained and rolling on the ground beside its silver companion.

"Now depart," said the old crone, with malignant triumph—"depart! You have fallen into your own trap, red witch. Depart and die!"

Pepa flung up her hand with a cry of despair, and slowly retreated, until she was swallowed up in the crowd. Wishing to recover herself, Jara gave the signal for music. When it began she leaned her chin on her staff and relapsed into silence. Challice looked at Mrs. Ingraham with horrified eyes.

"She must die," he whispered, referring to the absent Pepa.

"By her own act," replied Mrs. Ingraham in a low voice. "She intended to poison Jara, and has been forced to drink the draught of death herself."

The music went on for some considerable time, and still Jara, leaning on her staff, gave no sign. Thinking she had fallen asleep from sheer fatigue, Mrs. Ingraham tapped her on the shoulder. To her

horror Jara fell at that slight touch, and subsided into a limp heap. Challice, Mrs. Ingraham, The Appointed Three, arose to their feet with sudden dread, and the music abruptly stopped.

The Mother of the Cales was dead.

CHAPTER XII

VÆ VICTIS

"Then you think it advisable to leave the valley?" said Challice, meditatively stroking his chin.

"By no means," replied Mrs. Ingraham, with decision; "there yet remains one way out of the difficulty."

What that way might be her companion did not then inquire. He was very busy with unpleasant thoughts relative to their position. The unexpected death of Jara had complicated the outlook in no mean degree. As the Mother had failed, by reason of her sudden demise, to reveal the hidden name and so appoint a new queen, the gypsies were thus left without a head. During such interregnum the greatest confusion prevailed, and, in the absence of law or order, all the inhabitants of the gorge were more or less exposed to danger. The Romnany spirit needed a strong hand to curb its lawless instincts.

It was now close on twelve hours since the fatal occurrence, and Challice was discussing the situation with Mrs. Ingraham. Goliath had departed on some

errand relative to the embalming of Jara's body; thus they were left in sole possession of the cave. He urged her to leave Egypt in his company without further delay, but for some undivulged reason Mrs. Ingraham refused to entertain the idea. Want of sleep and anxiety had played havoc with their looks, but neither the one nor the other gave a thought to such trifles. They were forecasting the future, and devising plans to remedy the present chaotic position of Egyptian affairs. The Rommany instincts of Mrs. Ingraham were fully aroused to meet and quell the dangers threatening her race. Challice, on the contrary, was more concerned for her than for himself and the troubles of gypsydom.

"Do you not wish to know my idea, Lancelot?" asked she, piqued by his silence. Challice raised his head, and looked at her with a faint smile.

"I can guess it," he said, "the topmost stone of the pyramid."

"Yes! It was to provide against this contingency that Jara told us the secret. I propose to scale the pyramid to-night, with the assistance of yourself and Goliath. When I learn the name I go at once to The Appointed Three and ask them to proclaim me Mother of the Cales."

"Yet by doing so you condemn yourself to perpetual exile in this dreary wilderness."

"We can think of that afterwards, and devise

some plan of doing away with continual residence here. The more important thing at present is to act for the benefit of our race."

"Once you become queen, the position must be accepted forever," said Challice, seriously. "It is doubtful whether the Rommany would allow you to abdicate."

"I see no objection!"

"I see many! One woman only must know the name of the city. To constitute another queen you would have to reveal that name. Thus, there would be two women in existence with such knowledge. That is against gypsy law, and by gypsy law one would surely be put to death."

Mrs. Ingraham shuddered. This view of the case had not presented itself, and was sufficiently ominous to make her quail. She sought for objections.

"In the present predicament so serious a point might be waived," said she, much perturbed.

"I don't think so. Remember, those three who now know the name are already doomed. If you learn the name, queen you must be, and dwell here forever. I declare," he added, starting to his feet, "it would have been better had Pepa lived. You could have revealed the secret to her, realized her ambition, and then with me have left this City of Nightmare."

"I would never have told Pepa," said Mrs. Ingraham, tightening her lips; "she was an evil woman. Even had all occurred as you say, our lives would not have been safe. Pepa, possessed of unlimited power, would have slain us both."

"No! She was ambitious, not blood-thirsty. The queenship would have satisfied her. I suppose there is no doubt as to her death?"

"Of course not. You saw for yourself how she drank the cup of poison intended for Jara."

"And yet Jara also died," said Challice, significantly; "how do we know that her death was due to natural causes?"

"It could be due to nothing else," answered Mrs. Ingraham, shrugging her shoulders. "She was old and feeble. Excitement killed her."

"Well, we shall know the truth when Goliath returns."

"You surely don't think she was poisoned, Lancelot!"

"Who knows? All things are possible in this hellish place."

"But reflect for a moment," said she, vivaciously; "Pepa carried a gold and a silver cup, the former containing poison, the latter harmless wine. I quite believe she intended to poison Jara, but, owing to the astuteness of the old woman, was compelled to drink the deadly draught herself. Jara drained the

cup—the harmless cup," added Mrs. Ingraham, with much point, "which Pepa hoped to reserve for her own benefit."

"But supposing both cups contained poisoned wine?"

"There is no sense in such a supposition. Pepa would have gained nothing by killing herself at the same time as the Mother. No, my friend, depend upon it she fell into her own trap. It is a plain case of the biter bit."

"Still, I cannot believe that Pepa would have so calmly drank death," persisted Challice, with uneasy presentiment.

"Had she not, Jara would have thrust her into the chasm. Of two evils she chose the least."

"Yet she might have endeavored to preserve her life."

Mrs. Ingraham held her peace. It was worse than useless, she reflected, to argue with so obstinate a man. The conversation languished, and Challice strolled to the door for a breath of air. Hardly had he gained the entrance when Goliath brushed rudely past him and rushed into the cave. Challice followed, and, with Mrs. Ingraham, wondered at the man's agitation.

"What is the matter, Goliath?" they exclaimed, in a breath.

The gypsy threw himself prone on the earth and

breathed heavily. "I ran hither," he gasped, "from the Cavern of the Idols. Jara!"

"Is she alive?" asked Challice, thinking the old woman might have recovered from an attack of catalepsy. Nothing appeared incredible of so strange a personage.

"No, rye!" replied Goliath, sorrowfully shaking his head, as he struggled into a sitting position, "she is dead—dead as Pharaoh. But the embalmers have discovered the manner of her death."

"Poison!" ejaculated Mrs. Ingraham, with a startled glance at her lover.

"You are right, sister," said the gypsy, surprised at the accuracy of her guess, "by poison she died, at the hands of that accursed Pepa."

"Impossible!"

"It is true! The silver cup contained poisoned wine. Jara drank and died."

"But Pepa also is dead!"

"Pepa also is dead, brother," assented Goliath; "rather than lose her revenge she elected to die herself."

"There is some mystery in this," said Challice, wrinkling his brow; "even for revenge Pepa would stop short of taking her own life."

"She is dead!" repeated Goliath, with sombre intensity. "At dawn I saw her body, and heard the crying of her rom. Ah! the accursed witch," he

continued, vehemently, "may her soul be housed in a dog's hide for such evil doing."

"She cannot be punished in this life, at all events," said Mrs. Ingraham; "well, she and the Mother are dead, but what of Egypt?"

"The Appointed Three are in consultation. They alone know the sacred name, and will reveal it to whomsoever is elected by our brethren."

"No! no!" exclaimed Mrs. Ingraham, rising abruptly, "I must see them at once."

"It cannot be, sister," called out Goliath, as she walked to the door; "no woman is allowed to have speech with them. When the new queen is selected they will tell her the name and then die. With Jara shall their bodies be buried."

"But they must wait—they must wait," insisted Mrs. Ingraham; "to-morrow I shall tell them the name."

Goliath bounded to his feet with an ejaculation of astonishment. The information startled him greatly.

"You, sister," cried he, "you know the name of our city?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Ingraham, lying boldly for the benefit of the Rommany, "I know the name. Jara revealed it to me before she died."

"Job! Job!" said Goliath, clapping his great hands, "this is joyful news. You, my sister, will

be Mother of the Cales, and our brother, Pharaoh!"

"That is so," said Mrs. Ingraham, imposing silence on Challice by a look, "but there is no time to be lost. Fly, my brother, to The Appointed Three, and tell them to wait for twelve hours. Then the name will be revealed, the queen proclaimed."

Goliath, delighted by this settlement of so important a question, expeditiously left the cavern. The lovers, once more alone, faced each other in silence. Mrs. Ingraham was the first to speak.

"Well," said she, with a faint assumption of indifference, "do you not approve of my action?"

Challice hesitated. He was not prepared to answer so pointed a question without due reflection.

"I think you may live to regret it," he said, averting his eyes.

"My friend," said Mrs. Ingraham, with much earnestness, "I am at heart a true Rommany, and the welfare of my race is dear to me above all else. The future Mother of the Cales must be wise and judicious. I may be neither, but at least I have a due appreciation of the obligations involved. Among the many here, who can hope to select one woman with even such barren qualifications? It is not wise to trust to chance in so important a matter. By such a loose course the power may be placed in weak and unscrupulous hands. Mine may be the first, but you

know they are not the latter. Wishing to avert so great a disaster, I have spoken falsely; but then, remember the Jesuit motto, 'The end justifies the means.' And, after all," she continued, smiling, "I speak honestly. The falsehood of to-day will be the truth of to-morrow."

"Evidently you have made up your mind to this course," said he, a trifle ill-humoredly, "and, I presume, intend to read the name inscribed on the pyramid stone."

"This very night. I must climb to the apex myself and read it, since no other eye but mine may rest on the characters."

"It may be a more difficult task than you think," he objected.

"Of that I do not know. But the difficulties cannot be insuperable. I am only sure of one thing, that to-night I seek for the hidden name of Egypt."

"And thus be condemned forever to this lamentable exile," said he, impetuously. "It is a moral suicide. The life of a galley-slave were better. Surely you cannot contemplate with calmness so hideous an existence. You are by birth a gypsy, but your upbringing has been surrounded with every luxury. With such gentle rearing, with your wealth, beauty, passion for travel, to dwell here, where all are useless; Isaia, you must see that such a thing is impossible."

Deaf to his pleading, Mrs. Ingraham shook her

head with an irrepressible sigh. She felt in her heart how great was the proposed renunciation.

"I surrender all these," said she, "so that I benefit my race."

"Then I stay with you!" declared Challice, recklessly.

"You? Ah! no. A man is not of so self-sacrificing a nature."

"I tell you I stay here," he replied, doggedly. "My life is bound up in yours. Marry me, and I remain by your side till death."

"I would not put your devotion to so severe a test."

"Say the truth," cried Challice, roughly releasing the hand he had seized. "You do not desire the marriage."

"You know better than that," she answered, with gentle reproach. "I love you dearly, and wish to become your wife. Were we now in England I might, indeed, reject your suit for reasons which now," said she, "are futile. But should you elect to stay in this city of the Cales—"

"You will be my wife?"

"Not your wife," she corrected, pointedly, "but your romi. Ah! make no objections to such a term. We are Rommany, you and I. We marry according to gypsy law. It is as sacred a bond in my eyes, and should be in yours, as the ceremony of the church.

While in gypsy-land, no rom would forsake his romi, or would dare to do so."

"No husband would care to with such a wife as you," said Challice, folding her to his breast. "Marry me as you choose — Gentile or Rommany bonds, either are sacred in my eyes so that they bind me to you. Let us, then, become rom and romi, stay here, and rule over the Cales. I, for one, shall never regret it."

"How good you are!" she said, overcome by this great love, and let her head sink on his shoulder. They sealed the pact with a kiss, and remained locked in each other's arms for some moments. An elfish laugh resounded through the cave, and Mrs. Ingraham sprang away from his embrace. The laugh was repeated.

"Pepa!" cried the lovers, startled out of all self-control.

She leaned against the door-post, surveying them with malicious delight. This was no spectre of the tomb, but a living woman. As brilliant, as beautiful, as evil as of yore, Pepa smiled in the sunlight. Exulting in her triumphant trickery, she overwhelmed the astonished lovers with mocking laughter and ironical speech.

"It is merrier to see me alive than dead," said she. "Oh, well I guess the joy of your hearts at this resurrection! 'Alas! alas!' cried you, 'Pepa has perished

through her own folly!' But be comforted—be not inconsolable. Pepa is not dead; she lives still to gladden her friends, and become Mother of the Cales."

"But you took poison?" stammered Challice.

"Ho! ho!" laughed Pepa, jeeringly. "Did you think such foolishness was truth? No, my simple one, I drank no poison."

"Goliath saw you lying dead."

"Goliath saw me lying asleep," she retorted, coolly. "Dead I was not, else I scarce now would bask in your smiles"—this last, with irony.

"I understand," said Mrs. Ingraham, slowly, "your drinking out of that golden cup, your pallor, your hesitation, your despair, all these were but portions of a well-played comedy."

"It is true, my sister. I tricked Jara (may her soul burn!). She thought I drank death, when she herself had the fatal draught at her lips. The wine in the golden cup was harmless, therefore did I present it to the Mother (earth lie heavy on her bones!). She, as I well knew, would ask for the silver cup, thinking I designed it for myself. In the silver goblet was the poison, and to Jara (curses on her memory!) did I give it with tears and sighings. She drank, and died. I drained the golden cup, and lived —live still, to rule in her place."

"You fiend!" cried Challice, seeing at a glance the

ingenuity of the trick. "You calculated on Jara refusing the first cup."

"And so gave her the second, my Englishman. I fell not into her trap, but she into mine. Ha! ha!" she screamed, gleefully, "it was rare sport seeing how readily she took the poison. Arromali, there is no Cale so wise as Pepa."

"You are not wise now," flashed out Mrs. Ingraham, stung by this shameless glee. "To confess so great a crime to those who love you not is mere foolishness."

And with this she made for the door. Pepa not only abstained from action, but also stood aside to let her pass. As their dresses touched Pepa asked a question in a tone of gay banter.

"Whither go you, my sister?"

"To The Appointed Three."

"And your purpose, dear one?"

"To reveal your treachery."

"A useless task, my sister. Who will believe your story? Not The Appointed Three. Were they not present when I gave the golden cup to Jara (ugly dead witch!)? Did they not see Jara refuse the proffered goblet and demand the other? How then can they blame Pepa for the draught which Jara (may her soul perish!) drank so willingly?"

"Oh, as to that," said Mrs. Ingraham, quietly, "I

shall give your explanation, and our brother here shall bear witness to the truth."

"Aye, that I shall," he said, surveying Pepa with a look of aversion.

The crafty gypsy merely shrugged her shoulders and unfurled a black fan. The threat had no terrors for her.

"Go and tell all, sister, if it so pleases you," said she, scornfully. "I care not what tales you bear. All you say I can deny. Besides," she added, artfully, "who will believe this against the new Mother?'

"You are not our Mother, Pepa, and never shall be. You know not the name!"

"True enough. I have come to ask it!"

Mrs. Ingraham laughed at the effrontery of the woman. This last request was too shameless to be taken seriously.

"Do you think I shall tell it to you?"

"I am sure of it," answered Pepa, complacently, still waving her fan.

Making no answer, Mrs. Ingraham surveyed her rival with a contemptuous smile. Then she turned towards Challice.

"Remain here, Lancelot, and watch this woman. I go to The Appointed Three, and shall return with men to arrest her."

As Mrs. Ingraham flitted out of the cavern, Pepa,

attempting no pursuit, addressed herself to Challice with much eagerness. All her merriment was gone, and she now looked serious, anxious, menacing.

"Listen to me, my brother," said she, rapidly. "The Appointed Three are not in the Cavern of the Idols, but with my rom. With him they will stay till I tell them the name. You know it, do you not?"

"Perhaps," said Challice, ambiguously. By pleading ignorance he might weaken his position.

"Ah! I was certain of it! Tell it to me, and you leave this gorge a free man. Refuse, and I swear to hold you captive for the rest of your life."

"I shall not tell you," said Challice, resolutely. "Your game is up, Pepa. In a few minutes Mrs. Ingraham will tell all to The Appointed Three, and render your schemes abortive."

"No! no!" said she, her face darkening. "They think I know the name. I have told them so, meaning to learn it from you or your rani in the meantime. I must know it."

"Mrs. Ingraham—"

"She is now in the hands of Jativo—a prisoner."

"Great heavens!" cried Challice, springing towards the door. Before he could reach it Pepa whistled shrilly and clapped her hands. A dozen gypsies at once appeared.

"Seize the rye, and place him in the Pyramid Cave," she said, sharply.

"You fiend!" said Challice, in despair, and strove to break through the throng. The next moment they had closed around him. He was overpowered, and carried away with the mocking laughter of Pepa still ringing in his ears.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHASM

In the darkness Challice lost count of time. But few hours had elapsed since his imprisonment, yet these, to his excited mind, stretched into centuries. Never before had he realized how slowly time could move for one distracted. His surroundings inflicted terrible suffering, and placed his soul on a mental rack. Scarce could he conceive the tremendous power of the other world to react on the denizens of this. The Inquisition were less prolific of torture.

The close atmosphere, the palpable gloom, the sense of burial under the massy pyramid, were agonizing to his highly-strung nerves. Imagination played him strange tricks, and peopled the obscurity with undefinable horrors. This morbidity produced hallucinations so real, so vivid, that it was with considerable difficulty he persuaded himself of their non-existence. One ray of light would have dispelled the phantoms, but Pepa had robbed him of this consolation, by ordering the removal of all torches. Hence, the murk air engendered these monstrous

figments of the brain. No man was braver than Challice before actual danger, but the combating of these chimeras terrorized his soul. But that his manhood forbade, he could have shrieked aloud.

Latterly, with a sense of disgust at his own forgetfulness, he remembered the candelabra, and speedily had the lamps ablaze. The resultant illumination restored him to comparative cheerfulness. On all sides the gold and silver ornaments glittered with dim lustre, and invited attention to their tarnished splendors. Busy with his own thoughts he paid no attention to these useless gauds. For ten minutes, or thereabouts, he paced the vault to stretch his limbs, then, resuming a sitting position, gave himself up to contemplation. Such retrospection was anything but pleasant.

Naturally his first thought was of Mrs. Ingraham, and of the risks she ran while in her rival's power. Well aware that Pepa would never pardon one so inimical to her interests, Challice dreaded lest she might remove by violence this obstacle from her path. She was in too desperate a condition to stick at trifles, and, he foresaw, would willingly sacrifice them both for her own gain. That they knew the city's name had alone saved their lives, and there was no immediate danger while such remained untold. When she acquired the desired knowledge, death would be their portion. Of this Challice was

fully assured, as, after Jara's untimely end, and his own arrest, he no longer doubted the innate savagery of this woman.

Such reflections did not tend to cheerfulness, and, with a vague idea of shaking them off, he again began to perambulate his prison. For the sake of having some sound in the stillness he soliloquized, and delivered his own thoughts, in his own voice, to his own ears. In his then state of mind the idea did not strike him as ludicrous.

"A clever woman is Pepa," said he. "In one way or another she has removed all hinderances—Jara is dead, and myself and Isaia helpless in her power. I should not wonder if she gained her point in the face of all obstacles. But she can only achieve the position by learning the city's name, and neither of us can reveal that of which we are ignorant. True, we can tell her where it is graven"—here he looked upward. "But, as it is our only safeguard against this tigress, we must make terms before revelation."

A jewelled crucifix clattering to the ground turned his thoughts into another channel.

"How useless are those costly trifles to one in my position," he reflected, picking it up. "I would give all the spoils of this Aladdin's cave for freedom. Gold and silver, gems, and blood-stained diadems. What crimes do they not represent, yet, withal, cannot bring me the desire of my heart."

The imperious demands of appetite now began to make themselves felt. It was useless to search the vault for food and drink, as he well knew neither would be found. Yet, as Pepa would undoubtedly visit him for the purpose of extorting the name, he hoped she might bring provisions with her. It would be false policy on her part to starve one from whom she thought to gain information of vital importance.

"At present," said Challice, grimly, "she is no doubt doing her best to force Isaia into confession. A useless task if I know anything of a jealous woman's obstinacy. Finding she can gain nothing in that quarter, a visit will be paid to me. Likewise useless. I shall hold my peace. Nothing but Isaia's permission will compel my yielding."

Thus thinking, he took one of the lamps and clambered up the staircase in the vain hope of escape. As might have been expected, Pepa was too clever for negligence, and he found the stone firmly fixed in its place. In spite of the most rigorous examination with the lamp, he was unable to find any spring whereby to work the pivot, and so, in despair, returned. Scarcely had he refixed the lamp in its branch, when a breath of keen air swept into the vault.

"Here comes my jailer," said he, with a feeling of relief; "now to make the best possible terms for myself and Isaia."

Pepa expressed some surprise at the unwonted illumination of the vault, and complimented Challice, with many sneers, on his excellent memory.

"No doubt you were here with the Mother (may she burn!)," observed Pepa, "and recollected the lamps."

"You are about right, my dear," said Challice, quietly. "But there are more important things than lamps and irony; food, for instance."

"I thought of that, señor. Here is wine, bread, and a jar of olives You see," she added, setting them down on the floor, "that I do not intend to starve you."

"I give you credit for more wisdom. Well, how long do you intend to keep me here in this hole? It is unpleasant and unhealthy. A change of air would be beneficial."

Rather confounded by this cool behavior, Pepa stared at her prisoner in surprise, and ultimately delivered herself of a Continental truism.

"All Englishmen are mad," said she, hitching up her shoulders. "They never know when they are in danger."

"Am I in danger?" asked Challice, attacking the food with keen appetite. Pepa stamped her foot. It was not pleasant to be treated in so flippant a manner by one whom she thought to overawe. Her dignity was made mock of, and this she by no means relished.

"Of course you are in danger," she declared, vi-

ciously; "I could have your throat cut this very minute."

"I have no doubt of it, Pepa. But let me finish my supper first. You can have no idea how hungry I am."

"Bah!" said Pepa, lighting a cigarette. "You are a fine actor, my Englishman. You pretend indifference, while shaking in your shoes at the sight of me."

"What, at the sight of so pretty a face?" retorted Challice, in a joking manner. "Ah, you credit me with such bad taste. I declare," he continued, lifting up the flask, "that you came as an angel, especially when I saw you carried these provisions. Your health, my pretty one, and may you reap the reward of your actions."

"What reward is that?" asked Pepa, anxiously.

Challice leaned over, and drew his hand across her throat.

"The same reward you propose to give me," said he, with forced laughter. He was acting a part, and acting it well, but in his heart he dreaded the capricious temper of the young savage. This assumed nonchalance was the best possible method in which to treat her, and the truth of this became apparent by the tenor of her next remark.

"You are a brave man, my brother," she said, with genuine admiration. "I would you were my rom in place of Jativo."

"He is brave also, I think."

"He is a bear!" she retorted, sharply. "But let him not tax my patience too much, else he may never reign as Pharaoh."

"Not unless you reign as Queen."

"I am Queen!"

"Without knowing the hidden name! That is against Rommany law."

"There is nothing unlawful about it," snapped Pepa, whose temper was not improved by recent events, "I know the name of Egypt."

Intuitively Challice guessed that she was lying, but showed no signs of so uncomplimentary an opinion by his expression. Diplomacy was everything at this moment.

"I congratulate you," said he, with grave irony. "And who gave you the information?"

"Your rani."

With pretended indifference, Challice ostentatiously numbered his fingers.

"What are you doing?" she demanded, crossly.

"Counting the number of hours it has taken Mrs. Ingraham to become your friend."

"She is not my friend."

"Then she never told you the name."

"I forced it out of her," declared Pepa, backing up one lie with another.

"Then you did a very clever thing. But, of course, I know you can work miracles."

"You don't believe me," she demanded, nettled by such manifest satire.

"Not in the least," retorted Challice, coolly; "you say Mrs. Ingraham told you the name, thinking I am fool enough to blurt it out. Is that not so, dear one?"

Pepa laughed, and nodded. Charmed with this new mood of her prisoner, she half fell in love with him on the spot. Unfortunately, Mrs. Ingraham, on the one hand, and Jativo, on the other, prevented this half from becoming a whole.

"You are more agreeable now than you ever were. Take a cigarette, my gray owl, and let us talk of serious matters."

Rejecting the cigarette held out between her brown fingers, Challice selected one from his own case. It was as well to emphasize his distrust of her proffered friendship.

"I can't trust you, Pepa," he said, striking a match, "your gifts are dangerous. Tricks, such as you played on Jara, are not to my taste. They end so unpleasantly."

"Foolish creature!" answered Pepa, tossing the cigarette on the floor. "I never think of killing you. At least," she added, with engaging candor, "not until you tell me the name."

"Your coolness is very refreshing, Pepa. But, as my life depends upon strict silence, you may be certain I sha'n't speak."

The gypsy's face darkened. She wearied of the comedy, and resolved to bring it to an abrupt conclusion. Her fencing came to an end.

"Enough of this!" she said, imperiously, "I insist upon you telling me the name."

"That I absolutely decline to do."

"The consequences may be dangerous."

"Let them be dangerous."

"I shall kill your rani before your eyes."

"Nonsense!" retorted Challice, with a lightness he was far from feeling, "you know well enough that you dare not do such a thing."

"Dare not!" shrieked Pepa, springing up like a young tigress—"dare not!"

"No, dare not," he repeated, defiantly. "The Appointed Three would not permit it."

"The Appointed Three," sneered Pepa, derisively, snapping her fingers; "they cannot control my actions. They are in my power! I can do as I choose with them, and with you, also," she added, menacingly. "Oh, never fear, my Englishman, Pepa knows what she knows. Your rani is imprisoned in my cave. The English Rommany has been sent away from the valley. Our brethren think I know the sacred name, and I rule supreme in this place."

Challice simply shrugged his shoulders, and walked to the other end of the cave. In sullen silence Pepa waited his return. She was not prepared to meet

with so stubborn a resistance, and, utterly nonplussed, could think of no further wiles. When Challice returned he addressed her seriously.

"Listen to me, Pepa," said he, "neither myself nor Mrs. Ingraham desire to be further mixed up with your intrigues. Let us leave this gorge, and then you can act as you please."

"I shall not let you go until the hidden name is revealed."

"If Mrs. Ingraham gives me permission I will reveal it."

"But she won't give permission!" said Pepa, foolishly outspoken.

"In that case I must hold my tongue," he unhesitatingly declared.

Aware of her folly, Pepa bit her lip and considered. Then she made a concession.

"Come with me, rye, and see the rani. When together, I may succeed in bringing both to reason."

"Are you not afraid I should run away?" asked Challice, as they went up the steps.

"Not at all," retorted Pepa, "the Cavern of the Idols is guarded. Only by that way could you escape. Besides," she continued, wisely, "you would not depart without the rani."

"Little witch, how well you know me."

They emerged from the pyramid into the full glory

of the moonshine. High in the sky rode the planet, revealing clearly the naked deformities of the gorge. Midway between pyramid and chasm Pepa stopped abruptly, much to the surprise of Challice. He was about to ask her reason for this halt, when his arms were seized from behind, and he found himself helpless in the grip of two stalwart gypsies. Jativo glided like a shadow to the side of Pepa, and together they laughed loudly at the Englishman's plight.

"Ah, you Jezebel!" cried Challice, furious at such trickery, "you have broken your promise."

"I never intended to keep it," she retorted, "your dear one you shall not see in this life."

"What do you mean?" asked he, seized with apprehension, "if Mrs. Ing—"

"Oh, she is well, señor! In my cave I have safely bestowed her. But I did not mean you to come together. No! I knew you would leave the pyramid at my offer, and so trouble would be avoided. Now you are here, I shall have you dropped into yonder chasm unless you reveal the secret."

The blood ran cold in his veins at this speech, and he looked round for succor. No one was in sight save the four Rommanys. He was helpless, and, for the moment, thought to yield to superior force, and thus save his life. But when he reflected that on silence depended Mrs. Ingraham's life, he made up his

mind to secrecy. If he died she, possessed solely of such knowledge, might hold her own against Pepa.

"You dare not do it!" he declared, struggling with his captors.

"I dare anything," said Pepa, dauntlessly. "Consent to reveal the secret and you are free. Refuse, and you die this minute."

"You dare not!" repeated Challice.

For answer, Pepa held up her finger. At once the gypsies dragged Challice to the verge of that awful chasm. In the moonlight the water sparkled like a gray snake shot downward in solid bulk, and from the depths arose a chill, white spray. Down into the abyss slanted the rays of silver, half revealing the misty horrors. Tottering on the extreme edge, Challice felt that his last hour had come, and prepared to meet death bravely.

"Speak!" said the pitiless voice of the gypsy behind him.

"No!" he muttered, hoarsely, "no! no!"

The next moment he was suspended over the abyss. Closing his eyes, he expected every instant to be dropped into the boiling cauldron. A century of agony was contained in that second. Through the roar of the water he heard a fierce exclamation of rage from Pepa, and was drawn back to firm earth. The revulsion was so great that he sank fainting to the ground.

"These mules of English," growled Jativo, holding a brandy-flask to the mouth of the almost unconscious man, "they die sooner than give in. What is to be done next, my romi?"

"There is nothing to be done at present," said Pepa, deeply disappointed, "save to place him again in prison. You, Lopez and Rafael, can depart. I shall see that the Busnée is safe."

The two gypsies departed without remark, and Challice sat up to find himself alone with his enemies. Jativo scowled fiercely as he arose to his feet, but Pepa burst out laughing, and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Ah, how I love a brave man!" said she; "did you not think your grave gaped?"

"I think you are an incarnate fiend," said Challice, with cold fury; "why do you torture me like this?"

"To make you tell the name."

"I shall not do it!" he declared, "if I did not reveal it when hanging over those awful depths, how much less shall I do so now?"

Pepa looked at him with unwilling admiration, and turning towards Jativo, addressed some words to him in Rommany. The blacksmith responded with a furious gesture of dissent, and walked to the edge of the chasm. Pepa looked after him with an evil smile, then composed her features to a more amiable expression, and advanced towards Challice.

"My rom will not let you see the rani," said she;

"to-morrow, however, the funeral of Jara (curses on her memory!) takes place, and you shall be present. It may be that your rani is there. If so, persuade her to reveal all. Then you can go free."

"Very good," answered Challice; "then I shall return to my prison."

"One moment," observed Pepa, "I shall take you there, but first must speak to my rom."

With delicate steps she stole behind the unconscious Jativo. Challice thought she was about to speak, when, to his horror, she put out her hand and thrust the man into the chasm. With a cry of mingled rage and terror Jativo toppled into the abyss, and then there was no sound save the roaring of the torrent. Pepa turned on her heel and swung back to Challice. There was no vestige of regret discernible on her face.

"Are you a fiend of hell?" he gasped, overcome by the horror of this tragedy.

"I am a woman whom he struck thrice," she replied, in a sombre tone; "I vowed to be even with him, and even I am."

"I shall denounce you."

"Not if you are wise," said Pepa, quietly; "cry out, and I swear that you threw him in. Who will be believed, you or I? Come," she said, caressingly, "go down to the vault. To-morrow I shall learn the truth, if not from you, from the rani."

"Keep away, you murderess," said Challice, retreating as she advanced, "your hands are red with blood —the blood of your husband. I go willingly back to the vault, anywhere—anywhere from the presence of a she-Cain."

Pepa began to clap her hands and laugh loudly while, with disgust and horror, he fled to the pyramid and hurled himself down the staircase. His last glimpse was of the red witch dancing in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XIV

A ROYAL SEPULCHRE

On regaining the vault, Challice (a willing prisoner) threw himself down, but not to sleep. The incidents of the last twenty-four hours had proved sufficiently exciting, but that they should culminate in so terrible an episode proved almost too much for his powers of endurance. Maddened by the thought of losing all that she had so hardly won, Pepa would hesitate at no crime likely to further her interests. Jara stood in her way, and had forthwith been cut off with devilish ingenuity; Jativo proved restive, and he also had paid for it with his life. Pepa, a woman without a conscience, a most immoral woman, felt no remorse for such criminality. Rather did she congratulate herself on thus clearing the way for the speedy realization of her hopes. She was scarcely human when her self-interest was at stake.

Despite all cogitation, Challice was unable to guess her reason for sparing him at the eleventh hour. One motion of her head, and he had surely been hurled into that awful gulf. Were he thus disposed of, she

had still Mrs. Ingraham on whom to fall back for information. But for some inexplicable reason she chose to spare his life and admire his courage. This was gratifying, yet he felt uneasy. His safety was not altogether assured, and, unless he or Isaia complied with her demands, it was probable she would exercise the last act of authority and have them slain.

Thus thinking, he fell into a slumber, broken by visions and vague dreams. These latter, engendered by waking circumstances, took the form of gloomy forecasts. Ever in such nightmares he fled helpless before Pepa; ever she threatened him with death, and ever, by some shadow miracle, he thwarted her aim. This last hint of what might be cheered him not a little, as it pointed to a possible escape from the valley and his malignant enemy. Towards dawn he became conscious of a red light dancing before his eyes, and opened them to see Pepa bending over him with a torch. For the first time she looked anxious and haggard.

"Up, my Englishman," said she, hurriedly; "the morn breaks eastward, and there is much to do. At noon we lay Jara (vile witch and mother of witches!) in her tomb. Even now our brethren hew the sepulchre. To-night The Appointed Three hope to hear the city's name from my lips, so that they may proclaim me Queen ere they join the dead."

Challice, who had heard but half this speech, sat up, yawned, and rubbed his eyes. Angry at such indifference, Pepa shook him with nervous energy.

"Do you hear me, animal? To-night I must know the name."

"Indeed!" said Challice, in nowise angered by her epithets. "And what has that to do with me?"

"It has everything to do with you," she said, with fiery earnestness; "with you—with me—with the rani. Tell me the name revealed to you by Jara."

"How can I," returned he, petulantly, "when I am ignorant of it?"

Pepa's beautiful features became distorted with rage and dismay. On such an answer she had not counted. Dashing the torch on the ground, and thereby plunging them in utter gloom, she seized him by the wrist.

"You lie! you lie! Tell me the name!"

"I do not lie. The name is unknown to me."

"I implore! I command! I entreat!" said she, running through the gamut of expressions with feverish rapidity.

"I cannot possibly tell you that of which I am ignorant."

"Does your rani know it?"

"No; Jara made no revelation before she died. You have to thank yourself for such an omission."

With a furious gesture she thrust him away. Defenceless in the darkness, he quite expected to receive a knife in his ribs. Preferring to die above ground, if at all, he sought the staircase, and, to his surprise, jostled against Pepa, who was also making for the upper air. As he brushed past her she seized him, and dragged him up the steps.

"Outside! outside!" she muttered, rapidly. "Oh, fool! fool! you must know—she must know. I'll force your speech by torture and death."

By this time they were in the open air, under the roseate sky of dawn. No human being was astir in the Cup, yet through the roaring water Challice heard the metallic rattle of pick and shovel and mattock. The gypsies were preparing the tomb of Jara, but where, he knew not. He had but scant leisure to comment on the invisibility of the workers, for Pepa stamped before him with furious gestures. She screamed rather than asked questions.

"Is it true what you say?"

"Perfectly true," answered Challice, steadily facing the tempest.

"You do not know the name?"

"No!"

"Let me think! let me think!" said Pepa, thrusting her hands into the loose masses of her hair. "If this be so, there is yet one way. Jara knew I was dangerous, and would not have risked failure. This

was provided against. Yes! yes! The Mother talked in my hearing of a stone—a stone," she added, catching a conscious look on the face of her listener. "Ah! you know that stone?"

"Yes," said he, boldly; "I know the stone."

She briskly clapped her hands, pressed closely to his side, and hung on his arm.

"Ah! what joy! I deemed all was lost, but it is not so. You know where I can find the stone graven with the name. Come, my English lord, tell me where it is hidden!"

"I decline to do so without Mrs. Ingraham's permission."

"You must! I command your obedience."

"Oh, stop this nonsense!" he said, roughly shaking her off. "I refused last night, I refuse now. What are you doing?" he cried, falling back a step as she threw herself on her knees. "Do not plead to—"

"I am not pleading," she interrupted, "blind one; I consult the cards."

With a dexterity begotten by long practice she shuffled and spread out the pack, muttering darkly to herself, yet not so low but that Challice could hear her, she ran over the cards with delicate taps of her finger-tips.

"No more deaths," said she, throwing back her loose hair; "two deaths, but no more. Here I sit

queen—difficulties in the way. It comes from a man through a woman (a cursed one!)—fear and terror—danger, but not death. A woman works it—if not this one, that one. Six hours, and triumph in the seventh. Ah! I must win! Stars and cards, they speak truly."

The next moment she swept the cards into her pocket, jumped up smiling, and, without vouchsafing a word to the astonished Englishman, rapidly ran away. He, much perplexed by this strange conduct, and unable to attach any meaning to these (as he thought) incoherent words, looked after the flying figure with a frown.

"On what mischief is she now bent?" he thought, and with some cause. "A woman—a woman! That must be Isaia. I wish I could find her," added he, glancing disconsolately around. "She is shut up in one of these confounded caves, no doubt. Halloo, there!"

This last was directed at Zargo, who, at that moment appeared round the corner of the pyramid. The puny dwarf showed no disposition to stop, but rather increased his speed. Challice, with a few strides of his long legs, soon overtook the pigmy, who, thus compelled to pause, did so sulkily.

"Now, Zargo," said Challice, sharply, in the Spanish tongue, "tell me the whereabouts of Mrs. Ingraham."

"I don't know, señor."

"That is untrue, you monkey."

He followed up the remark by a smart shaking, whereat Zargo became more amenable to reason. Devoted as he was to Pepa, it did not chime in with his ideas to answer questions detrimental to her interests; but he saw that Challice was not to be trifled with, and so, with much whimpering, gave the desired information.

"The rani is in Jativo's cave."

"Can you not take me to her?"

"Not for the wealth of all the Moors," protested the trembling Zargo. "Pepa is also there, and would surely slay me."

Not desirous of meeting again with Pepa until he had thought of some plan whereby to thwart her scheming, Challice resolved to postpone his visit to Mrs. Ingraham for the present. Meanwhile he plied Zargo with questions.

"Where is Goliath Hicks?"

"He has left Egypt, señor. Pepa sent him to Palma, and he dare not return without permission."

"My best friend gone," thought Challice. "I must fight single-handed." Then, addressing a final question to Zargo, "What about Jativo?" said he.

"He has disappeared," said the dwarf, waxing voluble on this point; "no one has seen him since last night. Know you where he is, señor?"

"I think Pepa can best answer that question."

"Indeed, no," replied Zargo, in perfect good faith. "Pepa weeps because he is absent. To-night she will be proclaimed Mother of the Cales, and wants her rom to stand beside her as Pharaoh. I would he could be found!"

Challice laughed grimly at the idea of this widow's comedy performed by Pepa. For one instant he was on the point of narrating the tragedy, but, remembering how Pepa threatened to turn the tables, he held his peace. It was unwise to involve himself in new troubles before he extricated himself from the old; therefore he contented himself with an ambiguous reply.

"Look in the chasm, my lad," said he, meaningly; after which he stalked away, leaving the dwarf considerably bewildered by such unintelligibility.

Thus enlightened as to what had transpired during his imprisonment, Challice sought his old cavern, there, if possible, to satisfy his appetite. The sharp breath of the morning made him hungry, and he was fortunate enough to find a sufficiency of victuals for his wants. Afterwards he fell into a sound slumber, and arose, much refreshed, at noon.

Unexpectedly, he was struck by the intense silence which prevailed. He missed some familiar sound, and could not for the moment think what was lacking. Rather bewildered by so unusual an experience,

he stepped into the sunshine and looked around. Astonishment held him spellbound, tongue-tied, as he saw what had occurred. A preternatural stillness brooded in the hollow. More astonishing still, the torrent had disappeared.

In the face of this unaccountable occurrence he could do nothing but stare blankly at cliff and chasm. Where the torrent had slid so smoothly downward, appeared a ragged precipice of black rocks. Midway gaped an ugly hole, probably the entrance to some cavern. To the right of this he fancied a pathway wound deviously to the platform verging on the chasm. This arid cliff, displumed of herb and grass, unveiled by the misty water-fall, looked singularly forbidding in the crude sunlight. Robbed of its sole charm the valley looked truly repulsive in its naked deformity.

His attention was withdrawn from such lamentable contemplation by the sound of a low chuckle close at hand. Zargo, with malicious smiling, was peering up into his face. In deformity, the cliff and the dwarf were of apiece.

"You wonder at that, señor," said the dwarf, waving his hand towards where had been the water-fall.

"Who could help wondering at it, Zargo. What has become of the torrent?"

"Its course has been diverted for the moment.

Did you not see our brethren toiling up there at dawn? They have turned aside the snow stream and it now pours down the eastern side of the mountain to astonish the peasants of the plain. There will be much talk of the devil city to-night, señor," finished Zargo, with a chuckle.

This information supplied a reason for the invisible workmen of the dawn. High up the peak had the gypsies labored to change the course of the torrent. But for what reason? Challice questioned his little companion.

"It is for the burial of Jara," answered Zargo. "Yonder is the cave of our dead, where the Mothers of the Cales sit crowned and robed. To-day will Jara be placed therein, and then the veil of water once more will hide the sepulchre of queens."

"How do they take the body to the tomb, Zargo?"

"By yonder path. One man only can walk on it at a time. Two will go, before and behind the dead Mother. Her embalmed body will rest among the queens, and then—"

"And then the torrent will be restored to its accustomed channel."

"No, señor. Not until The Appointed Three are placed by the Mother."

With a gesture of horror Challice turned his back on the dwarf. Only too well did he under-

stand the meaning of that last remark. The three unhappy men who knew the city's name were to be slain for such knowledge, and would thus accompany Jara to the shades. There was a heathenish smack about the business which set Challice dreaming of Attila and his murderous funeral. Indeed, he wondered whether the obsequies of Jara might not be copied therefrom. What with diverted stream and immolated victims, there was more than one point in common between the two.

Not without a certain amount of curiosity did he approach the chasm. A forbidding-looking gypsy guarded the path's end so that none could desecrate the burial place of queens. Thus excluded from a nearer view, Challice, on the verge of the platform, strained his eyes into the tenebrous cavern. He thought he espied dim figures sitting therein. But this might have been fancy. Yet he could conceive an assemblage of dead women—crowned, sceptred, robed—awaiting in those dusky depths the sound of Gabriel's trump. When their new sister joined them would they not rise and wave a mute welcome with fleshless arms? Well was it that the veil of water hid so lamentable a spectacle. The mere thought of it chilled the blood of the man standing in the strong sunlight.

No longer softened by falling water or by rising spray, the chasm gaped like the funnel of a vol-

cano. Jagged rocks set beyond the line of fall still retained their angularity of outline. More than half-way down on one of these Challice saw the shattered body of Jativo. With revulsion he drew back, and in doing so caught sight of Pepa standing some little distance away. She also was eying the human wreck, but with no expression of pity or remorse. Evidently she regretted that it had not been sucked into the entrails of the mountain, so that all signs of the crime might disappear. As usual her egotism swamped all other considerations.

While thus ruminating, she encountered the indignant glance of Challice, but, in nowise daunted by such plainly shown repugnance, drew close to his side.

"Is it not a pity," said she, pointing towards the corpse with her chin, "it will be seen by our brethren."

"Very probably," answered Challice, coldly, "and what story do you propose to tell?"

"I might say that you thrust my rom into the chasm."

"Yes; you might, but you will not do so."

"Why not?"

"For the very simple reason that you have not yet given up all hope of making me reveal the whereabouts of the graven stone."

"You are right, my brother, I will tell our brethren that Jativo fell in by accident. As to the graven stone, this afternoon you will tell all."

"I don't think so!"

"I do," replied Pepa, with a confident smile. "I have a way by which to make even you speak."

Ending this speech with a triumphant nod she vanished behind the pyramid; Challice had no time to consider her meaning, for, as she disappeared, a wild chant arose in the distance. Hastening to the mouth of the street, he beheld a strange procession coming towards the hollow. It was the funeral cortege of Jara.

The gypsies had assumed no sombre garments in token of mourning, and their gaudy dresses were somewhat out of keeping with the solemnity. A throng of women with dishevelled hair came first, beating their breasts and loudly wailing. Afterwards the mummy of the old woman seated stiffly in a kind of open sedan chair borne by four men. The procession ended with files of silent men, and tailed off in scattered groups of children. No obsequies could have been simpler, yet the lamentations of the women, the unnatural silence of the men, and the eastern character of face and garb, invested the whole with inexplicable fascination.

As the sedan was borne past him, Challice, flattened against the pyramid by the throng, bent

forward to catch a last glimpse of his kinswoman. Swathed in yellow garments, decked with gems and gold, crowned with the rude silver diadem, there was something piteous about the spectacle. Preserved by the embalmer's art, it was wonderful how life-like appeared the body. Jara looked as old and withered in her death as she had duriug her life, and, beyond that once bright eyes were dull, there was but scant difference in her appearance.

On the verge of the abyss the sedan was set down so as to face the female mourners. These, kneeling in long lines, began with much wailing to declare the virtues of the deceased. When they finished their vociferations, Pepa, garbed as ever in red, made her appearance, to place bread and salt in the lap of the dead woman. Of what this was symbolical Challice could not guess. The ceremony over The Appointed Three, still veiled from head to foot, tottered forward. A hush prevailed, and in tremulous voices they adjured the dead Queen to nominate her successor.

"Ventriloquism," murmured Challice, deeming this a new trick of Pepa's. Yet he was wrong in such a supposition, as he speedily saw. Thrice did the trio make their demand, without receiving answer. Then they melted into the crowd, and the gypsies sprang to their feet. During the singing of melancholy strains the mummy was lifted out of the

sedan by two men, who bore it towards the cliff pathway. With infinite care, for the danger was great, they carried the dead woman along that tortuous track, and at length disappeared into the cavern. The mourners, swinging to and fro with rhythmical monotony, still sang lamentably, and clapped their hands.

By this time the hollow was in semi-darkness, and already the sky scintillated with early stars. For some considerable period the gypsies wept and wailed, and contorted their bodies before that menacing cliff, now shadowed with gloom. Challice grew tired of these wearisome proceedings, and would gladly have retreated to his cavern, but that he was closely wedged in by the surrounding throng.

At length the two men who had carried the mummy emerged from the cave, and climbed back to the platform. The wailing and beating of breasts ceased as they appeared, and the crowd seemed to be waiting for the happening of some event. The gloom increased, and still the mourners waited in silence.

Suddenly a red light flared out of the cavern with infinite brilliancy. In the scarlet illumination appeared the circle of dead queens. Jara, sceptred and crowned, was there in her appointed place—the latest comer to that royal sepulchre. Only for a minute or so did the radiance last, then it died

away as unexpectedly as it had come. For the moment the Rommany had seen their royal dead, and now the cliff, densely black, faced them again. After some shouting they chanted some wild hymn and dispersed.

"They will meet at midnight," whispered Pepa, at the elbow of Challice, "to proclaim me queen."

Without commenting on this statement, Challice walked away. Pepa bounded after him and touched his arm.

"Come," she said, persuasively, "come to my cavern, where waits the rani to gladden your eyes."

Challice obeyed her at once.

CHAPTER XV

WOMAN'S WIT

"I said midnight," remarked Pepa, when they reached the cave, "but the true hour of my proclamation is nearer dawn. This," she added, with some emphasis, "is to give you time to make up your mind."

"Where is Mrs. Ingraham?" asked Challice, irrelevantly.

"She is close at hand, and will come forth when permitted. Before she appears, I have a confession to make. Will you not be seated, my brother?"

Uneasy at her soft speech and languorous glances, Challice did as requested, but took up a position as far away from this charmer as the surrounding narrowness permitted. Light streamed duskily from a torch fastened to the wall, and they sat in a reddish, smoky twilight which, by its vagueness, magnified the extent of the cave. Pepa alone stood out flesh and blood amid this shadow world, and her low tones echoed like the buzzing of bees under the hollow roof. At times, rather to his dismay, she ostentatiously fingered the knife in her girdle, and evidently from

her bent brows was set on some desperate resolution. Though at the outset she spoke more of love than of death, Challice felt by the stirring of his blood that some danger was in the air. During that interval he conceived only too well what must have been the sufferings of Damocles.

"What confession can you make likely to interest me?" said he, replying to her earlier remark; "there can be nothing in common between us."

"My brother," murmured the gypsy, with canorous voice, "I love you."

"I am sure you do," replied Challice, ironically; "your every act proves it. The inn, the road, the chasm—oh, I have to thank you for many evidences of your affection."

"Jest not with me," she retorted, smiting her hands passionately together; "what I say is true, blind one. Yet at Palma I hated you, in the valley I hated you for coming between me and my ambition. I would have slain you, willingly, many times. Now your courage in danger has compelled my love. Said I not you carried bar lachi? Ah, well I know it is no spell, but the dauntless soul you bear that makes me adore you. There is now no obstacle to our union, for Jativo is dead. Make me your romi, my dear one, and reign by my side as Pharaoh."

"I thank you for your excellent opinion," answered

Challice, with cold gravity, "but all obstacles are not yet removed. Jativo is dead, indeed, yet Mrs. Ingraham still lives. I cannot forget my love for her. Nor," he added, pointedly—"nor can I forget how your rom perished."

"He is dead; let him rest, and accursed be his memory," she said, fiercely; "no one struck Pepa but what she gave him death. I would destroy him twice over had I the chance. As to your rani, she lives, but by my hand shall die, unless you tell me where I can find the graven stone."

"You fiend," said Challice, well knowing she would be as good as her word; "you would not dare to do this thing."

"Would I not? Ah! you know better than that. But why love her? Love me."

"Nothing would induce me to marry you," declared Challice, ungallantly; "you have two deaths on your soul."

"And I shall have the third if you yield not."

"Let me see her! let me see her!" he implored, ignoring this savage aspect.

"Yes, you shall see, but neither touch her nor speak to her, unless you do as I bid you."

They were both on their feet by this time, facing one another with grim determination, he to see Mrs. Ingraham, she to prevent it. For one mad moment Challice thought to use physical force against Pepa,

but, as he might have guessed, she had assistance near at hand. Even in the dusk she read such purpose in his eye, and, falling back a step, threw up her hand. The experience of the previous night was repeated, and Challice found himself again seized unawares by two gypsies. While thus rendered helpless, Pepa taunted him, cruelly.

"A great man you are, my gray owl. Well did I know your intention. But, foolish one," she continued, changing her banter to menace, "had you struck me, this knife would have been in your throat."

"I did not intend to strike you," responded Challice, sullenly; "I am no coward. My sole desire is to see Mrs. Ingraham."

"And what then?"

"I shall ask her to let me tell you that which you desire to know. If she consents and you gain the knowledge, promise that we shall go free."

"Yes," answered Pepa, promptly, "tell all and you leave the gorge with your rani before dawn. Unless," she added, dropping her voice, "unless you would stay beside one who loves you."

"Such a thing is impossible," said Challice, coldly; "and now, perhaps, you will ask these gentlemen to release me."

"Not yet, my gray owl, I said you should see, but not touch, the rani."

Wondering what could be the meaning of this enigmatic sentence, Challice remained passive in the grasp of his captors, while Pepa glided behind the gorge. In a few minutes she returned, half leading, half supporting Mrs. Ingraham. Challice saw the woman he loved distant but a few steps, yet could not approach nearer. He groaned aloud as he beheld her well-known gray travelling dress. The face in the shadow he was unable to see, but judged that the expression to be one of weary longing.

"Isaia!" he cried, trying to break away from those who held him, "Isaia! Speak to me."

Mrs. Ingraham made no response, but sank in the seat to which she was conducted by Pepa. She neither started, nor lifted her head, nor gave the least sign that she was aware of his proximity. Yet she could hardly have failed to recognize the voice of her lover. With malignant joy Pepa noticed the pallor which overspread his face when he found himself thus unheeded.

"She loves you no longer, my brother."

Paying no attention to her mockery, Challice again called on Mrs. Ingraham, but the limp figure tumbled at Pepa's feet gave no sign of recognition—no sign of life. He began to suspect foul play.

"You have killed her. She is dead," he declared, again vainly struggling.

"She is not dead," rejoined Pepa, coldly; "I have drugged her."

"O God, is this woman human?" said Challice, hoarsely. "Witch! why have you done this? If I were only free. Ah! if I were only free."

"Now I can place my finger on your weak spot," said the gypsy, noting his agitation with great satisfaction. "If not afraid for yourself, you at least dread lest some harm should come to your rani."

"You would not harm her," he entreated. "Oh, Pepa, Pepa! if you have any womanly feeling—if your heart—"

"It depends on yourself," she impatiently interrupted.

"Depends upon me?"

"You know my wish. Reveal the whereabouts of that stone and she lives; refuse as hitherto and she dies. Now choose, my valiant English lord."

Challice uttered an ejaculation as her knife blade flashed in the crimson light. Scarcely could the two men hold him back. And Pepa mocked at his impotent exertions to gain freedom. And all this time Mrs. Ingraham, comatose, helpless, lay on the ground. It seemed as though her end had surely come."

"Spare her! spare her!" repeated Challice, with labored breath.

"You know my terms," said Pepa, dropping the knife's point so that it touched the skin; "tell me where I can find the stone, otherwise—"

Her significant play with the bared blade was too much for his endurance. With violent speed he gave the desired information.

"The topmost stone of the pyramid—the apex!"

Pepa straightened herself, and replaced the knife in her girdle. Taking no further notice of the senseless woman, she sprang lightly towards the staircase. But a moment she paused beside Challice.

"If this be true, she lives. If false, I slay her and also you. Bring him along."

"Let me stay beside her," implored Challice.

"Bring him along," she repeated, stamping her foot; "he must be on the spot to point out the stone. To the pyramid at once." And thither, despite all protestations, he was dragged.

Across the sky drifted ragged clouds, which at times obscured the waning moon. Occasionally the planet shed feeble lustre on the hollow, but, for the most part, it was heavy with shadow. No human being was abroad, and their foot-falls echoed jarringly in the silence. Nothing could be more melancholy than that midnight loneliness, and this was still further accentuated by the absence of the roaring torrent. The consequent hush had in its inaudibility a suggestion of the unseen.

Finding resistance useless, Challice submitted to be led towards the pyramid, and when there looked around for Pepa. She was close beside him, and hastily waving aside his custodians, whispered fiercely in his ear:

"Say not why I wish to see this stone, else you die."

Before he could reply, she flitted away in the darkness. During her absence he attempted to converse with the gypsies, but they, disdainfully silent, spoke neither to him nor to each other. Left to his own thoughts, he wondered how Pepa would contrive to scale the pyramid. He was not long in doubt, for Pepa speedily returned with two coils of rope and another Rommany.

Anxious as he was about Mrs. Ingraham, he could not but take an interest in these strange proceedings. Aided by her companion she made a slipknot, and encircled with this the base of the pyramid. Over the opposite side of this she looped the other rope, and held it firmly while the man pulled hard at the slipknot. By this artifice it narrowed up the polished sides of the pyramid, and when nearly at the apex was restrained from slipping off altogether by the attached rope. Thus Pepa provided herself with means of ascent, and, with her knife between her teeth, soon scrambled up like a red insect. She remained at the summit for a considerable time, and,

as Challice judged by the sound, used her knife freely. Soon fragments of stone and mortar rattled down, and then Pepa herself descended, bearing a flat, black tile.

Hastily lighting a torch she retreated to some distance and examined her treasure. Challice thought he spied vermilion letters on the tile, but was too distant to distinguish accurately. In a few minutes she flung torch and tile into the chasm, after which she literally danced towards Challice. Success had crowned her efforts.

"You are free, my gray owl," said she, brightly. "I know that which I desired to know."

On addressing a few words to the three gypsies they rapidly made off, bearing the ropes with them. Pepa, left alone with Challice, threw herself on his neck in a frenzy of delight. He strove to rid himself of this unwelcome attention, but she refused to take the hint.

"I am Queen! I am Queen!" she repeated, joyously. "The name was engraved on the tile, and now I can tell it to The Appointed Three. Ha! ha! Spoke not the cards truly? By a man through a woman. She in the cavern forced you to reveal the secret."

By main force Challice wrenched asunder the clinging arms, and thrust her away. That she should thus triumph over all obstacles was bitter indeed.

"Now you have gained your ambition, perhaps you will let me go," he said, savagely.

"Go when you will, my brother."

"And Mrs. Ingraham?"

"Ah!" said Pepa, with an evil smile, "she is still in my cavern."

"Let me go to her at once."

"One moment," said she, laying a detaining hand on his arm. "Will you not accept my offer, and be Pharaoh?"

Challice shook his head, and pointed significantly towards the chasm. With her usual sharpness Pepa soon interpreted this pantomime, and smiled, cruelly.

"I hated him," she declared, referring to the dead Jativo; "he was a brute and a coward. But you I love! Ah, my dear one, make me your romi, and together we shall reign over the Cales."

"No!" said Challice, curtly, and turned on his heel. She followed him.

"I will give you the treasures of Egypt."

"No!" he reiterated. "No!"

"My life! my soul! all I have shall be yours," cried Pepa, still trying to detain him. "Turn not from one who loves you dearly."

"If you could give me the world, I should refuse your kisses," said he, disdainfully. "I accept nothing at the hands of a murderess. All I desire is that you

should fulfil your promise. Lead me to Mrs. Ingraham."

The fire died out in Pepa's eyes. She shrugged her shoulders, snapped her fingers, and made an attempt at laughter.

"Power and wealth I have, but love is denied me," she said, with real pathos. "Eh! what does it matter. That is the price I must pay to Fate. Come!" she added, moving away, "let us seek the cavern."

"At last!" thought Challice, thankfully. "At last I shall see and speak with Isaia."

Up in the cavern still burned the torch, scattering misty lights on the woman lying on the ground. Pepa pointed thither, but Challice could not fathom the meaning of the jeering laughter which accompanied the gesture.

"Here is your heart's desire."

Falling on his knees he raised the unconscious head. A ray of light fell on the countenance, and he uttered a cry of astonishment. It was not Mrs. Ingraham. Now he understood the meaning of her ironical merriment.

"I have been tricked! duped!" he cried, furiously. "What does it mean?"

"It means what you have just said," replied Pepa. "You have been tricked, duped."

"And Mrs. Ingraham?"

"She is far away from Egypt. Since I saw her with you I have not set eyes on her. When she left your cave to denounce me to The Appointed Three she left the valley."

"It is false! You would not have let her go."

"That is true, my brother," said Pepa, regretfully. "I should not have let her go had I known. But the English Rommany knew my purpose, and warned her. Then she fled from Egypt."

"And left me to my fate," he muttered.

"You can see from that how little she cares for you. Better make me your romi."

"There is some mystery about this," said Challice, looking directly into her eyes. "You are not telling the truth."

"By my soul I am, brother. I deemed she knew the name, and would have held her prisoner until she told it to me. But she escaped me, and you only could aid me. For that reason I did not have you cast into the chasm. I had none but you to reveal the name. So I tricked you by this," she finished, calmly pointing to the senseless woman.

"But the dress!"

"Ah, she brought many with her. I but made my sister yonder put on an English dress, and drugged her, lest she should betray me. The rest you know!"

"I congratulate you on your trick," said Challice, with deep bitterness.

"I congratulate myself," she replied; "I now know the name."

"And what is it?"

"That I dare not tell. At dawn I reveal it to The Appointed Three, and they proclaim me queen. Will you not stay for the ceremony?"

"No!" he said, abruptly, walking out of the cave. "I never wish to set eyes on you again."

Pepa called after him, but he made no answer. She did not attempt to follow him, and he regained his own cave unmolested. Here he packed up his belongings, intending to send for them by Goliath when he arrived at Palma. Then he walked down to the Cavern of Idols, with the purpose of leaving the hateful valley forever.

Through the cavern he took his way, but at the massive gate, which closed the entrance, was stopped by two gypsies. These guardians of the portal eyed him in anything but a friendly manner.

"Where go you, brother?" they asked, suspiciously.

"To Palma," he replied, curtly. "Let me depart."

"No, brother! Until the new Mother is proclaimed no Rommany may go hence."

"By whose order?"

"By order of Pepa, our new Queen."

Challice stamped his foot with vexation. Afraid lest he should escape, Pepa had laid her plans excellently well. Even if he sought her again it was doubtful whether she would permit the gates to be opened. Now that she was in love with him, he dreaded lest in some fit of caprice she should keep him prisoner in the valley. On the whole he judged it wisest to acquiesce for the present.

"When can I leave Egypt?" he asked, anxiously.

"When the new Queen is proclaimed at dawn. Then will the gates be open."

Disgusted at his futile attempt to escape, Challice returned slowly towards the platform fronting the cave. While there he thought he heard the sound of opening gates, but fully assured that return would be useless, remained where he was. There came the sound of voices, the swift running of feet, and, before he could turn round, a hand was placed on his shoulder.

"Goliath!"

"My brother!" said the gypsy, earnestly. Ah! my brother, you yet live!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE CORONATION

Anxiously questioned by Challice concerning the truth of Pepa's story, Goliath forthwith narrated the events which led to the flight of Mrs. Ingraham. In the main they coincided fairly well.

"When I departed, my brother," he said, "I at once sought The Appointed Three, but learned from Zargo that they were shut up in the cavern of Jativo. Also I was informed that Pepa intended to slay the rani. On learning this, and knowing that Pepa would surely keep her word, I left the Cavern of Idols and ran back with the intention of warning her. While descending these steps I saw the rani coming down the street. She also was bent on seeing The Appointed Three, and learned, as I, that they were in the power of Pepa. I told her of the danger in which she was placed, and entreated her to fly from Egypt. For some time she resisted, and wanted to return for your sake. I reminded her that Pepa was with you, and that by returning she would place herself in the hands of the red witch."

"You did not seem to consider that I also was in danger."

"No, my brother, you were always safe. I knew Pepa loved you, and would save you from harm. But the rani she hated, and would have slain forthwith."

"There is some truth in that," said Challice. "Well, Goliath, when she consented to fly with you did you have much difficulty in leaving Egypt?"

"By no means," replied the gypsy; "at once I had the gates opened on the plea that the rani was banished from Egypt by The Appointed Three. We departed for Palma, and for some time remained there in much anxiety. Neither she nor I, dreading the anger of Pepa, dared to return."

"And why are you here now?"

"Because there is no longer any reason for my staying in Palma. The rani has gone to England."

Challice uttered an ejaculation. That she should leave Majorca while his fate was yet in the balance touched him nearly. With some bitterness he mentioned this to Goliath, who forthwith found excuses for such conduct.

"You wrong the rani, brother. She was assured of your safety before she left the island."

"And by whom?"

"By Zargo."

"You mistake," said Challice, coldly, "Zargo has been here all the time."

"Listen to me, brother," said Goliath, laying his hand on the arm of the Englishman, "when the rani was safe at Palma, I returned hither for news of you. As I said before, it was dangerous for me to enter Egypt and draw down the vengeance of Pepa, therefore I watched on the road for those of our brethren who might tell me of your fate. While there I met with Zargo and questioned him closely. He informed me that Pepa had been proclaimed Queen, and that you were safe. He also added that you would soon leave the valley."

"And when did he tell you this precious story?"

"About ten or twelve hours after we left Egypt."

"At that time," said Challice, quietly, "my life was in great danger. Pepa threatened me with death unless I told her where to find the tile inscribed with the name of the city."

"But you refused, brother?"

"I refused until she forced it from me by trickery. She disguised a woman as Mrs. Ingraham, and threatened to kill her unless I told her the secret. Not knowing that Mrs. Ingraham had left Egypt, and thinking her life was in danger, I revealed all to Pepa. Now," added Challice, bitterly, "she knows the name, and in another hour will be proclaimed Queen of the Cales."

"Ah, the witch! I cannot blame you, brother. Who can think to escape the wiles of a woman! Aye! aye! now I see how falsely Zargo spoke."

"You believed his story at the time?"

"Could I do otherwise?" asked Goliath, in surprise; "it seemed fair enough. I did believe it, brother, and carried back the good news to our sister. She thereupon determined to leave Palma, and is now on her way to England."

"Did she give you no message for me?"

"None! Save that she expected you to meet her in June. Then she would explain all."

"I shall be glad to learn all," retorted Challice; "however, I am glad she is safe, and as Pepa has given me my freedom I also will leave Egypt after the coronation."

"When does that take place?"

"The preparations are now being made," rejoined Challice, as they descended the steps. "Let us see the ceremony, Goliath, and then depart."

"So Pepa is Queen after all!"

"At the cost of two deaths."

"Two!" repeated Goliath, in a startled tone. "Jara, I knew, was slain by her, but what other victim has—"

"Jativo," said Challice, curtly.

"Jativo! Is he dead?"

"Last night she thrust him into the chasm. At

the present moment you can see his body lying there."

"Is this known?"

"It is known that Jativo is dead, but Pepa says he fell in by accident. Should I tell the truth, she swears that I shall be blamed for the death. So, as I don't want to die myself, I hold my tongue."

"Ah! what a clever woman is the Mother!" said Goliath, admiringly.

Struck by the change in his tone, Challice looked inquiringly at him. It seemed as though Goliath were about to rank himself among the friends of Pepa.

"Nay, brother," said the gypsy, interpreting the look, "think not that I love the witch, but who can withhold admiration? She has overcome all difficulties, and now is Queen."

"She will make an excellent ruler," observed Challice, dryly, "if a remorseless nature be necessary for a sovereign."

As there was no chance of leaving Egypt at present, Challice retired to his cave. There he slumbered, thoroughly worn out by the excitements through which he had passed. Goliath sought out Pepa, and evidently made his peace with her, for, now that she was Mother of the Cales, she did not withhold pardon from her enemies. Having achieved her ambition, she could afford to be generous.

And here it may be observed that Pepa fully deserved her hardly-won queenship. It is true that the realization had involved the sacrifice of life. Yet she hardly looked upon herself as a murderess. Nevertheless, a murderess she was, and should have been, and would have been, hanged in any civilized country. But in this nameless city, inhabited by a barbarous race, the crimes passed as (significant word) accidents. Pepa's moral sense was blunted by upbringing and surroundings, so that she felt no remorse for having so promptly disposed of these living obstacles. A gay, daring creature, she was not wantonly cruel, and would have preferred a throne gained with less bloodshed; but as such was a necessity, she bowed to the inevitable. Her great satisfaction was that she had done these deeds without being found out. That, in Pepa's opinion, compensated for their deliberate wickedness. With such sophistries can the criminal quiet his conscience.

Hereafter, when Queen, she proved an excellent and capable sovereign. The lawless Rommany needed a strong hand to control and guide them, and this they found in Pepa. Untroubled by remorse, sentimentality, or scruples, she subdued her nature to her office, and made all personal inclinations subservient to the well-being of the gypsy community. A born ruler, she had now found her fitted sphere, and the Rommany, as time went on, expressed them-

selves more than satisfied with the successor of Jara.

She never took to herself another rom. Whether it was that she truly loved Challice, or that she desired to be unhampered in administration by a husband, it is hard to say; but single she remained, and contented herself with ambition in place of love. This was scarcely feminine, but Pepa had always proved herself superior to the weaknesses of her sex. Her body was that of a woman, her soul truly masculine, and the blame of such ill-assortment lay with Nature.

As may be easily guessed, Challice was by no means sorry to leave that dreary valley. Many strange adventures he had met with during his travels, but this last experience, the oddest of all, satisfied his craving for romance. Henceforth he was content to settle in England and, if she consented, to marry Mrs. Ingraham. The melancholy of the place was not without effect on his spirits, and in after-life he suffered at times from depression which he always set down to his terrible experience in that land of shadows. Neither he nor Mrs. Ingraham returned to Egypt. They had paid the visit obligatory on all the Rommany race, and cared not to repair thither for pleasure. Moreover, it was scarcely safe to do so while Pepa was Mother of the Cales. Her power was too great, her memory too excellent.

Altogether they thought it the wiser plan to remain absent.

From his sleep Challice was awakened by the rolling of drums and clashing of cymbals. The ceremonies of the coronation had commenced, and he hastened to see the installation of Pepa as Queen. At the entrance he was joined by Goliath.

"I have made peace with Pepa," said this latter, "and she bids me take you from Egypt when the torrent once more falls on yonder rocks."

"The torrent!"

"Aye, brother! When The Appointed Three proclaim her Mother, they will die painlessly, and be borne to yonder cavern. Then the torrent, restored to its old course, will once more veil the Sepulchre of Queens."

It was now near dawn, and the sky was rosy with the coming day. Wild and forbidding looked the hollow under those delicate hues, but Challice, ignoring such savagery, to which he was now accustomed, watched the crowd round the pyramid. The Rommany wore their gayest robes, and on the dais were displayed the treasures of Egypt. The scene was similar to that of the funeral, but an air of jollity pervaded the assemblage, and there was much laughter, and many jokes. As yet, Pepa had not appeared, but The Appointed Three, still veiled, sat in their old places. Instead of casting a chill over the proceed-

ings, as would have been expected, the gypsies took no notice of them. Their presence was but the formality of custom, as the mummy at Pharaohonic feasts.

The ceremonies did not differ greatly from those of the previous night. There was the same dancing and singing, the same drinking and feasting. Challice preferred to play the part of on-looker, but Goliath mingled with his brethren and enjoyed himself thoroughly. As dawn brightened into day the merriment increased, and when the heavy yellowness of sunlight shot fan-like rays behind the peaks, the festival seemed in danger of degenerating into the unbridled license of a saturnalia. At this moment Challice found Pepa by his side.

"For the last time I have come," she whispered, looking sadly at him—"for the last time to ask your love."

"I have told you a dozen times, I tell you again, it is useless."

"Your rani has gone to England," continued she, ignoring his refusal; "and by such desertion proves how little she cares for your love. Mount yon dais with me, and I shall present you to our brethren as Pharaoh."

"I decline the honor."

"Then you have determined to leave Egypt?"

"I have determined to leave this city of fiends, to go to England, and to marry Mrs. Ingraham."

She winced at the plainness of his speech. Every cold word cut like a knife, and she turned pale with emotion. It was hardly conceivable that this wan and haggard woman could be the sparkling, daring Pepa who had dared so greatly. Challice, moved by the reproach in her eyes, could have found it in his heart to pity her, but that he remembered her shameless criminality, and steeled himself against the weakness.

"Go!" he said, harshly, waving his hand towards the dais. "The reward of your crimes awaits you."

"I might have guessed your answer from the cards," she murmured; "marriage and love for you, widowhood and power for me. The strands of our lives were not interwoven by Fate. Yet we would have made a rare couple. Farewell, brother," added she, catching his hand; "never shall I behold you more. Yet forget not Pepa, who rules in this bleak valley, and whose hate changed to love—to love which she gave up for ambition. Farewell! farewell! my brother."

Before he could stop her, she passionately kissed his hand, and moved through the crowd towards the dais. When next he beheld her, she, draped in a yellow mantle, stood before The Appointed Three, high above the now silent throng. Yet there was no triumph in her face, but rather the worn look of one who had suffered. It was not remorse for her crimes,

but the anguish engendered by unreturned love. Only another phase of her profound egotism.

To the crowd she spoke eloquently in Rommany. Unversed in the tongue, Challice was unable to understand the speech, but guessed that the gist of it referred to Jara's death, and her claim to be Queen. Several times she was interrupted by loud cries of delight, and the people seemed well content that she should rule over them. When she ended there was an interval of music and singing, after which the most interesting portion of the ceremony began.

Turning towards those three figures sitting so silently under their enshrouding veils, Pepa whispered in the ear of each. One after the other they nodded, and arose from their chairs. Two led her forward, and the third and oldest addressed the crowd. The speech was also in Rommany, but Challice afterwards learned that the speaker proclaimed Pepa, Mother of the Cales. "She had," he said, "revealed to them the name of the city—the name on which depended the existence of this refuge, and with such knowledge was worthy to reign over the Cales." The remaining two also vouched for the truth of this statement, and, their task being ended, the three returned to their seats. Challice turned away his head at the final scene of this ghastly mummery. It was too much for his nerves.

Pepa received from the hands of Zargo a cup of

wine, into which she squeezed the juice of herbs. With the fatal draught she moved slowly towards the dying trio, amid a profound silence.

"I bring you release from sufferings," she said, in a loud voice; "give me in exchange the crown of the Cales."

In answer to this request, the crown, a rude silver circlet, similar to that worn by Jara, was produced, and silently placed on her head. Thus acknowledged Mother of the Cales, she offered the cup to him who had crowned her. With trembling hands he drank the poison, and, giving back the cup, sank into his seat. The other two followed his example, and then Pepa, advancing to the front of the dais, turned the cup upside down to show that the wine had been taken. A shout arose hailing her as Queen.

"This is horrible," said Challice to Goliath, who had lately rejoined him; "why should they kill these miserable men?"

"They know the name of the city, brother, and must die. It is the law of Egypt."

"Still, if they but kept them prisoners till—"

"You mistake, brother," said Goliath, coldly, "these men do not wish to live. One is old and weary of life, two are dying of disease. They die without pain, for the poison is swift and subtle. Better is sleep than waking, brother, and better death than life."

"You don't seem to think so, Goliath."

"I am strong and well, brother. It is a joy to live. But when I grow old and feeble, or should disease ruin my body, then would I welcome, as yonder three, the draught of Egypt."

"Are they now dead?" asked Challice, seeing how still were the veiled figures.

"Dead," was the sombre response.

The tragedy had no effect on the assemblage. It seemed rather the signal for fresh merriment. Pepa sat before the three dead men, and absently watched the crowd moving restlessly round the dais. She had now gained that for which she had so long struggled. Yet the attainment seemed to give her but little pleasure. Displaying but scant interest in the revels, she glanced every now and then in the direction of Challice. He resolutely kept his eyes turned away, only waiting for the conclusion of the ceremonies to depart. Dance succeeded to dance, song to song, and it seemed as though the gypsies were bent on revelling throughout the day.

"Can we not go now, Goliath?" asked Challice, in a whisper.

"Impossible! The gates will not be opened until the three are placed in the cavern of the dead. See, the Mother is ordering it to be done."

Raising her arms to command silence, Pepa spoke a few words in Rommany. Six men stepped on to

the dais, and, to the music of a solemn chant, bore away the bodies of the dead. One after the other they were carried along the winding path and placed in the cave. After this entombment, a great number of gypsies disappeared into one of the caverns.

"Where are they going?" asked Challice.

"To turn back the torrent," answered Goliath. "Now we can depart. But see, rye, the Mother desires to bid you farewell."

This was intimated by Zargo, who, much to the annoyance of Challice, led him through the crowd to the foot of the dais. Pepa rose to her feet as he appeared. She had bidden him farewell as a private individual, and now proceeded to do so as Mother of the Cales. Her mode of address, though authorized by custom, sounded strange, coming from so young and beautiful a woman.

"My son," she said, in a clear, steady voice, "you leave us now. The heart and home of our race you have seen, our ceremonies, our ancient customs. Go, then, and forget not that you are a gentle Rommany. Wherever you may wander the Cales will welcome you to heart and tent. Take also this jade eye, in memory of the Mother who now bids you farewell. It brought you hither, it will take you away, and in all dangers protect you and yours. It is a true bahi. Farewell!"

And all the gypsies crowded round him with friendly faces.

"Farewell! Farewell, brother!" they shouted. "Brother, farewell!"

Challice, casting a glance at Pepa, bowed, and walked down the street, followed by Goliath. On the platform, before the Cavern of Idols, he paused for a moment. There was the gaudily dressed throng, the black pyramid in the centre, and before it the figure of that evil woman whose blood-stained hands now held the reins of power. As he looked, sullen thunder filled the air, and over the black rocks spouted the torrent. Masses of green water streaked with foam fell like a veil over the Sepulchre of Queens, and the steady roar once more resounded through the valley. Falling torrent, crowned figure—those were his last glimpses of the nameless city.

EPILOGUE

On the second Sunday in June, Challice once more found himself in Hyde Park. Again it was the hour devoted to Church Parade, and fashionable London assembled under the leafy trees. Between the function of this and that of last year there appeared to be absolutely no difference. Smartly-dressed people, smiling faces, gossip, and constant recognitions. But for the change in toilet and coiffure, Challice might well have been deceived into thinking that Time had remained stationary, and that his Rommany adventures were but the result of vain imagination.

Yet, though unaltered to the casual eye, what changes had occurred in the lives of many during the past twelve months. Some were dead, others were married, this one had lost his money, that one her reputation. Fate had shaken the Kaleidoscope of Life, and, though the colors remained, the order was changed. Challice was well aware of all this, yet the outward sameness of everything provoked his irritation.

"Great Heavens!" he thought, as he leaned over the rail, "who would think that a year had passed since I last beheld this scene, or that events sufficient to alter the course of my life had occurred during that period? Like Dante, I am the man who has been in hell, yet returns to find the world rolling on in the same old groove. Surely I have dreamed a dream, and Pepa, Jara, Jativo, that dreary valley, those awesome ceremonials are but shadows of the night."

He had been some time in England. Goliath accompanied him as far as Palma, and from thence returned to Egypt, while Challice turned his face homeward. Gladly did he leave that melancholy neighborhood of barbarism and superstition. Established in his chambers, frequenting his old haunts, meeting friends and foes and idle acquaintances, he felt that civilization had its compensations. After so long a spell of cave life and primevalism, the luxuries of London refreshed him greatly. So youthful were his feelings that it might have been his first season. With astonishing zest he plunged into a whirl of amusements that last year he had despised, and altogether became rejuvenated. After all, the true secret of enjoyment lies in contrast.

Since leaving Egypt he had heard nothing of Mrs. Ingraham, and studiously abstained from making inquiries about her. He knew that she would fulfil

her promise, and meet him at the appointed time; so, now that it had come, he repaired nervously to the Park, anxious to have his doubts set at rest. Notwithstanding his scrutiny of the throng, he was unable to see her, and thinking she had not yet arrived, occupied his time in greeting old acquaintances. Among them was an old college friend, whom he had seen in the Caucasus Mountains.

"Is this you, Challice?" said he, heartily shaking hands. "So you have arrived from foreign parts. I expected to see you when I returned from the Black Sea, and called at your chambers, but you were still absent. Where have you been hiding yourself?"

"I have been in Majorca."

"Out-of-the-way hole, isn't it? and so dull. I was there a week and was bored to death. There are no adventures there."

Challice smiled to think how the speaker would stare if he told about Egypt. It would not be wise to speak of those adventures, however, so he held his peace. The next remark of his companion touched on the subject nearest to his heart.

"Have you seen Mrs. Ingraham since her return?"

"No," replied Challice, his heart beating violently. "Is she here?"

"Sitting round by the Achilles Statue, holding her usual court. She, also, has been travelling, and showed here three weeks ago. Wonderful woman,

sir. By-the-way, Challice," added the speaker, eying him significantly, "is it a fact the—eh—well, perhaps I shouldn't—"

"Shouldn't what?"

"Shouldn't congratulate you."

"I am afraid it is rather premature," answered Challice, coldly.

"Well, you might do worse," said the other, with the good-will of an old friend. "She is very beautiful, and has no end of money. Eh! Oh, you are going! Good-bye for the present! Come and lunch with me next week."

Leaving this rattle-pate, Challice took his way towards the Achilles Statue. Sure enough, he discovered Mrs. Ingraham here, seated in the centre of her friends. She looked pale, he thought, and greeted him a trifle coldly.

"How do you do, Mr. Challice?" said she, hinting silence with her eyes; "and where have you been of late?"

"Here, there, and everywhere," he answered, lightly. "I only arrived in town two weeks ago."

"And I, three," said Mrs. Ingraham, mischievously. "What a strange thing it is that we did not meet one another abroad."

"Very strange, indeed."

All this for the benefit of the surrounding friends, who would have been horrified had they known the

truth. These few words exchanged, Mrs. Ingraham turned her attention from Challice to another young man, and he waited patiently until such time as she should graciously bestow on him the light of her countenance. One by one the circle melted away, and then Mrs. Ingraham declared her intention of walking in the direction of the French Embassy.

"And if you care to come also, Mr. Challice," she said, carelessly, "I shall be glad of your company."

Challice accepted the office of escort with avidity, and they took their way through the brilliant crowd. When comparatively alone, Mrs. Ingraham began to speak of Egypt without further preamble.

"I am so glad to see you again, Lancelot."

"Yet you did not mind leaving me to my fate," he answered, bitterly.

"How unjust you are. I was the victim of circumstances. You may be certain I should not have left Egypt had I not been assured of your safety by Zargo and Goliath."

"All's well that ends well," said he, philosophically; "but I think that, after all that I have undergone, I deserve my reward."

"Well," said she, mischievously, "and why did you not marry Pepa?"

"Ah, there was lost the chance of a royal alliance! Up to the last moment she offered to make me Pharaoh! But I refused because of you."

"And you expect me to say 'Yes?'"

"I hope so! I think I have earned that answer."

Mrs. Ingraham was silent for a few moments, and walked on slowly.

"You, no doubt, wonder why I did not accept your offer before."

"Well, yes," hesitated Challice. "I do not know why you should have taken a whole year to answer so simple a question."

"Not so simple to answer as you think," she replied, "seeing it involves the loss of my fortune."

"The loss of your fortune!"

"Yes. As I told you, Mr. Ingraham advised me to marry again; yet, when his will was read, I learned to my surprise that, if I did so, I was to go penniless to my second husband. Why he should play me such a trick I do not know."

"It is a pity," said Challice, slowly; "but I really do not see that it matters much. I am quite wealthy enough for both."

"I guessed that such would be your answer," she said, looking gratefully at him. "Yet you can guess that I did not want to come to you penniless. Therefore I asked a year's delay, and during that time have been doing all in my power to upset the will. With the exception of that week in Majorca, I have not been out of England. Yet all my work

has been in vain. The will stands. In the event of my marriage the money goes to the next of kin; and, if you elect to make me your wife, you marry a pauper."

"I do so, willingly! It is you whom I love, not your money."

"In that case I will marry you whenever you choose."

"Let us be married before the end of the season," said Challice. "I have waited long enough for my happiness."

"And Pepa?" she hinted, smiling.

"Ah! You were jealous of Pepa," said he, with a laugh. "Yet I assure you it was without cause. Pepa preferred ambition to love, and now that she is Queen of the Cales is quite content."

"You would not like to visit Egypt again?"

"Would you?" he demanded, putting a counter question.

"No! I don't think it would be wise, with Pepa in power."

"She would not harm me."

"Would she not?" said Mrs. Ingraham, sceptically. "I am afraid she would. Had not Goliath hurried me away to Palma, I should have been a dead woman long ago. Ah, Lancelot," she added, meaningly, "you say that you did not love Pepa; that I believe, for who could love so evil a person; but she loved

you, and would willingly have put me out of the way so as to have had you for her rom."

"After all," said Challice, pensively, "I am sorry for Pepa! Think of her shut up in that dreary valley forever."

"It is her own choice, and she rules as Mother of the Cales."

"Do you not regret the loss of the dignity?"

"No!" answered Mrs. Ingraham, decisively. "I am content to be your wife; Egypt would have driven me mad. Look at all this verdure, and think of that herbless, treeless solitude."

"I don't envy Pepa, myself, save for one thing."

"What is that?"

"She knows the name of the city," said Challice, laughing. "There is something perversely tantalizing about that. I should like to know that name."

"Do you remember that eastern story?" said Mrs. Ingraham—"that story of the sage who underwent all difficulties to learn the secret of a certain shrine. When he tore aside the veil he found nothing but an empty room."

"And the point of this parable?"

"Simply this. I do not believe Egypt has a name. That, in reality, it is a nameless city. What Pepa whispered to The Appointed Three was, 'It has no name.'"

"That might be so, certainly," assented Challice.

"That such should be the case would be quite in keeping with the absurdity of the whole idea. However, I am glad to have seen Egypt. It is a unique experience."

"And a very terrible one," said Mrs. Ingraham. "If I ever again receive the message of the jade eye, you may be sure I shall not obey it."

Challice produced the emblem from his pocket.

"Pepa gave it to me," he explained, "as a talisman of good-fortune."

They were standing on the bridge. Mrs. Ingraham took the jade eye and threw it into the water.

"Let it lie," she said, slipping her arm within his; "we want no fortune from Pepa. Together we can face what Fate has in store, without spells or magic."

"There," said Challice, looking where the jade eye had sunk—"there is the last of Egypt."

THE END

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